



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

NT Government's *A Working Future* Policy Initiative: the devil's in the detail

20 May 2009

Northern Land Council (NLC) Chief Executive, Mr Kim Hill said that while he welcomed aspects of the Northern Territory Government's *A Working Future* policy initiative released today there was still a lot of detail yet to come before the NLC could assess how it would impact on Aboriginal people.

"We welcome the Territory Governments core targets and its commitment to improved funding conditions, but this is just a policy framework and we need more policy detail to enable us to fully inform and advise our constituents – so there are still a lot of unanswered questions," said Mr Hill.

"Specifically, we need to know exactly what the NT Government means by "growing" our biggest towns into "proper towns" because there are real issues surrounding access to towns via Aboriginal land, whether the towns will be open to all and sundry, and how will this impact on the permit system and Aboriginal peoples private property rights.

"Also, what will become of the smaller towns like Barunga, Beswick, Bulman, and Jilkminggan? They are not outstations or homelands, and nor are they destined to be a "proper town"."

Regarding homelands, Mr Hill reiterated the NLC's support for Aboriginal people choosing to live on their homelands because of their strong attachment to their land.

"This is the critical factor in this whole debate – and evidence is now emerging about the health benefits of Aboriginal people living on their homelands and engaged in caring for country practises, and that it is more cost effective for governments, service providers and Aboriginal people.

The NT government must recognise that the critical factor in the success or failure of this policy will be whether it is adequately resourced and funded.

"The NLC will continue to be involved in the consultations with the NT Government for the development of this policy. We will also discuss this at our next Full Council Meeting and seek instructions from Traditional owners on what the NLC's policy will be in response to the Government's initiative."

Ends.

Mr Hill is intra-state and is only available by telephone – 08-8971 9899

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