



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

NLC urges the Northern Territory Government to consider amending the Pastoral Land Act

14 November 2017

The Full Council of the Northern Land Council, meeting in Tennant Creek this week, has urged the Northern Territory Government to consider amending the Pastoral Land Act to allow native title holders to benefit from new economic activities on their traditional lands.

The government last month proposed amendments to the Act which would allow pastoralists to secure sub-leases for non-pastoral business activities, and sold the proposal as a boost for jobs and productivity in remote areas.

The NLC was not consulted about the proposed amendments and protested to the Government. The Chief Minister later agreed to withdraw the amendment and hold discussions.

“The Government’s proposal would clearly preclude the carrying out of native title rights and interests,” said NLC Chairman Samuel Bush-Blanasi.

“It needs to be remembered that pastoral lessees do not own the land and do not have a right of exclusive possession. Native title co-exists with a pastoral lease on the same area and the rights of native title holders require equal respect along with the pastoral lessee.”

The Government’s amendments would further entrench the Howard Government’s 10 Point Plan enacted in 1998. This changed the Native Title Act to remove the Right to Negotiate and deny native title holders the right to be involved in economic activity on their traditional lands where it co-exists with pastoral activities in relation to the approval of primary production activities.

“The Northern Territory Government should not be part of this denial of Indigenous rights,” Mr Bush-Blanasi said. “The NLC is not opposed to diversification on pastoral leases but it must not be at the cost of the future of Aboriginal people of the pastoral estate.”

The NLC wants a legal right to be recognised in the Pastoral Land Act to give native title holders a substantive say about the grant of any non-pastoral use permits or sub-leases, so that they could benefit from new economic activities on their traditional lands.

NLC contact: Murray McLaughlin 0429 153 363