

Vale Dr Bush-Blanasi

13 November 2023

Today we mourn the loss of Dr Bush-Blanasi. His mother was a Yolngu woman from the Blue Mud Bay region and he was raised by a Mayili man from Wugularr community (Beswick).

Dr Bush-Blanasi will be forever remembered for leading the Northern Land Council and dedicating his life to serving Aboriginal communities in the Top End.

Representing the Katherine region, he served as Deputy Chair for three terms and led the NLC as Chair for four consecutive terms. Our organisation is stronger for his leadership and will benefit from his legacy for years to come.

His leadership was bold and uncompromising. Never deferential; he spoke truth to power. His political nous was second to none; equally as influential when talking with countrymen or politicians. He engaged naturally to deliver tough messages to those who needed to hear them.

He lobbied tirelessly on behalf of Aboriginal people, without seeking personal recognition. The passion he held for Aboriginal empowerment never wavered.

Dr Bush-Blanasi was a staunch advocate for Aboriginal women, always making sure they contributed to discussions and their voices were elevated in forums. He keenly advocated for family-centric policies which created safe and nurturing environments.

He was a passionate supporter of two way learning through the Learning on Country Program which allowed Aboriginal children living in remote communities a better opportunity to navigate the world while keeping strong in their culture.

His contribution to the fight for sea rights enhanced the recognition of traditional ownership of Aboriginal people across the NT coastline. This was a seminal marker in the rights of Aboriginal peoples.

Most of all Dr Bush-Blanasi was a family man. His children and grandchildren were never far from his thoughts. He loved to be surrounded by his extended family and often shared stories of their achievements and successes.

The Northern Land Council's Members and Staff offer our condolences to the family of our Chair. A fearless leader, gone too soon.

The professional achievements of Dr Bush-Blanasi span many years.

He was an elected ATSIC representative and a long-serving board member of the North Australian Indigenous Land & Sea Management Alliance, Imparja and Northern Building Consultants.

He was a founding member of the Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists, Aboriginal Sea Company, Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory, Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association and the Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation.

In 2023, Dr Bush-Blanasi was awarded an honorary doctorate by Charles Darwin University and was the Northern Territory Australian of the Year.

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