



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

MINISTER'S EXTRAORDINARY FULL COUNCIL MEETING

22 February 2019

The interim NLC CEO, Dr Jak Ah Kit, today condemned the announcement by Senator Nigel Scullion, Indigenous Affairs Minister, that he will convene an extraordinary NLC Full Council meeting in two weeks on Friday 8 March 2019 to consider perceived conflict of interest “findings” said to be contained in an Audit Committee report.

“Senator Scullion has totally ignored a written opinion dated 19 February 2019 from Raelene Webb QC which demonstrates that the report cannot be given any weight or relied upon in respect of perceived concerns about "governance and leadership"”, Dr Ah Kit said.

“Senator Scullion also ignored resolutions by six of the seven NLC Regional Councils in meetings since last Friday, which considered the report and Ms Webb’s opinion. Each expressed full confidence in the Executive Council, and rejected the Minister’s decision to call a Full Council meeting.”

“The report does not provide a sound, let alone lawful, basis for the Minister’s decision”, Dr Ah Kit said.

“Senator Scullion has politicised, and given credibility to, baseless allegations.”

“Ms Webb’s opinion details that the purported "report" does not comply with accepted auditing standards. It contains no recommendations or findings. It lists some, but not all, of the evidence, but makes no attempt to evaluate the evidence, or make findings of fact.”

Ms Webb advised that aspects of the report exceeded statutory power, and that the timeline Senator Scullion imposed for its completion was – in Ms Webb’s words – “exceedingly and unrealistically short, so as to inhibit the fact finding and evaluative task and to preclude any confidence that all relevant information was obtained and an objective report produced.”

“Ms Webb’s opinion contained a detailed refutation of all concerns that NLC Executive Council members are in a conflict of interest due to being directors of the Aboriginal Investment Group, or in relation to s 19 licences considered by the Audit Committee”, Dr Ah Kit said.

“It is also very disappointing that the Minister has totally ignored the Prime Minister’s Closing the Gap statement in Parliament last week. He is going against the grain of the good will that was offered.”

A copy of resolutions by six NLC regional Councils is attached. The remaining Regional Council meeting will be held next week.

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ATTACHMENT

NLC REGIONAL COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

Borrooloola and Ngukurr Regional Councils 19 February 2019

The Borrooloola and Ngukurr Regional Councils join with the Katherine, VRD and West Arnhem Regional Councils in:

- (i) endorsing and expressing full satisfaction in the Executive Council's recent actions to deal with pressing matters, and not bow to outside pressure;
- (ii) expressing full confidence in the Executive Council; and
- (iii) rejecting any attempt to call an extraordinary Full Council meeting; and also
- (iv) calls on the East Arnhem and Darwin/Daly Regional Councils to support and endorse this resolution.

East Arnhem Regional Council 22 February 2019

The East Arnhem Regional Council joins with the Borrooloola and Ngukurr Regional Councils, and the Katherine, VRD and West Arnhem Regional Councils, in:

- (i) endorsing and expressing full satisfaction in the Executive Council's recent actions to deal with pressing matters, and not bow to outside pressure;
- (ii) expressing full confidence in the Executive Council; and
- (iii) rejecting any attempt to call an extraordinary Full Council meeting; and also
- (iv) calls on the Darwin/Daly Regional Council to support and endorse this resolution.