

The Northern Land Council: looking forward to a continued 'critical role' in the COVID-19 response and the development of new Aboriginal economies in the NT

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The Northern Land Council welcomes the recognition by the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP – as reported in *The Australian* today - of the 'critical role' that the NLC and other NT Aboriginal Land Councils have played in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The quick and decisive response by the NLC meant remote communities in the NLC area were protected from COVID-19 by a range of measures that included the existing permit provisions in the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act* and the highly effective use of powers through the *Commonwealth Biosecurity Act*.

This evening at Darwin's Hilton Hotel the NLC will host Minister Wyatt and invited guests at an event that will provide a fresh approach for the future delivery of key services and economic development for Aboriginal Territorians.

Key elements of that new pathway will be a renewed partnership between the Federal government and the NT Land Councils and a clear-eyed approach to the delivery of NT government services, particularly in areas like remote housing and policing.

It will also see the roll-out of a stimulus package that will deliver jobs through investments in infrastructure and projects to provide opportunities and jobs using Aboriginal land and knowledge for Aboriginal enterprises.

"The Northern Land Council thanks Minister Wyatt for his recognition that the NLC, working with the other NT Land Councils and the Aboriginal health services, played a critical role in protecting our communities – particularly those dozens of small remote homeland communities across the NLC area – from the threats posed by this terrible virus," said NLC CEO Marion Scrymgour.

“But our work isn’t finished with just protecting those communities. We also have to ensure that the many small Aboriginal-owned businesses that have suffered dire consequences from the knock-on effects of COVID-19 are given the right support to recover and prosper in the future,” said Ms Scrymgour.

NLC Chairman Samuel Bush-Blanasi said: “2020 has been a difficult year for all of us, and especially people in the Aboriginal business community – the large and small tourist operators, the arts centres, homelands, service providers, tradies and builders. Now is the time to reconnect, to re-set and re-energise our plans for the future,” said Mr Bush-Blanasi.

Mr Bush-Blanasi continued, “We’ve identified some fantastic ways to support those Aboriginal businesses and projects that have been doing it tough and to develop new opportunities, new businesses and new jobs. We look forward to working closely with Minister Wyatt, the Federal government, the NT private sector and the NT government to get us through these difficult times and make sure that we develop strong and viable Aboriginal economies into the future.”

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