

# LAND RIGHTS NEWS

NORTHERN EDITION



NORTHERN  
LAND COUNCIL

50  
YEARS  
OF LAND RIGHTS  
1973-2023

AUGUST 2023 [NLC.ORG.AU](http://NLC.ORG.AU)

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ILLEGAL ACTIVITY ON COUNTRY



A VOICE FROM THE HOMELANDS

AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST ABORIGINAL NEWSPAPER. SINCE 1973.

**EDITORIAL**

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**FRONT COVER**

Main image: Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi holds the Barunga Voice Declaration with Minister for Indigenous Australians, Hon Linda Burney MP at Barunga, June 2023

Bottom Left: Borroloola/Barkly  
Council Member Tony Jack

Bottom Right: East Arnhem  
Council Member Yananymul  
Mununggurr

# Message from the Chair – Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi

## Welcome to the August 2023 edition of Land Rights News.

THE year has been marked by many significant events, but none more profound than the passing of Yunupingu. A fierce fighter for the Northern Land Council and for Aboriginal people across the NLC's region and Australia, he will always have a special place in our hearts

We will continue what he started and always honour his memory and his historic achievements. We are part of his great legacy.

Prior to this year's Barunga Festival, we held our first Full Council meeting for 2023 and a joint Land Council Meeting with the Central Land Council in the Barunga community.

Members of the Central Land Council, Tiwi Land Council and Anindilyakwa Land Council signed the Barunga Declaration and presented a copy of the document to the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP.

The 2023 Barunga Voice Declaration calls "for the recognition of our peoples in our still young Constitution by enshrining our voice to the parliament and executive government, never to be rendered silent with the stroke of a



Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi with Administrator for the Northern Territory, Honourable Hugh Heggie PSM

pen again".

I travelled with representatives from all four land councils to Canberra to formally present the Declaration to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

As we head towards the referendum later this year, the four land councils of the Northern Territory continue to stand together on the referendum. We are asking Australians to stand with us and vote 'YES' so we can all have a better future.

Importantly, to be able to vote, we must be enrolled with the Australian Electoral Commission. Make sure you are enrolled and your details are up to date. We need our

voices to be heard.

Earlier this year I was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Charles Darwin University. It was a privilege to receive this doctorate in front of family, friends and colleagues.

I want to reinforce what I said when I learned of the award — this recognition would not be possible without the support of constituents and councillors from across the NLC footprint.

Although this is an individual recognition, it is due to the support of my Aboriginal brothers and sisters, and I intend to continue using the platforms afforded to me for the betterment of our people.



Joint meeting between Northern and Central Land Councils at Barunga, June 2023

# Message from the CEO – Joe Martin-Jard



Joe Martin-Jard

In 2023 the Northern Land Council has taken a significant step, formally endorsing the 'Activating Land and Sea Rights' strategy and shaping the beginning of a new course for the organisation.

THIS strategy is based on a phrase first used by our former long-serving Chair, Yunupingu. I am grateful Yunupingu's family has generously agreed to allow us to continue to use these words.

Endorsed by the 125th Full Council in June, this policy informs our medium to long-term strategic direction as we transition from our fight for land and sea rights, to activating the hard-won interests and rights in Aboriginal country.

My thanks go to those who contributed to the development of the policy and I eagerly anticipate the NLC's success as the strategy is implemented throughout the Land Council's operations.

'Activating Land and Sea Rights' builds on the success of the Land NLC's first fifty years of operation, a milestone that we begin to celebrate this year in September.

The last fifty years have seen countless challenges and heartbreak for Aboriginal Territorians who have struggled to reclaim their traditional lands and waters. There have also been momentous achievements and victories – built on the unfailing strength of TOs and the advocacy of land councils.

I invite you to join us in September to mark the NLC's 50 years and commemorate those that have come before us, celebrate our successes, and look towards the next fifty years supporting Aboriginal custodians to fulfil their rights and aspirations and thrive on their country.

As seen in the first half of 2023, the NLC continues to fight

for the rights of TOs of the Top End. We are representing TOs for Kakadu and Gove in their High Court cases, as well as TOs from the Borroloola/Barkly region in their compensation claim against the Northern Territory Government over the effects of the McArthur River Mine.

The NLC is ensuring the legal rights of TOs are upheld regarding activity occurring on their land and in their seas and I am grateful to our staff for their continuing, tireless efforts.

I would also like to highlight the historic opportunity we have with the upcoming referendum. Supported through a joint resolution by the four Northern Territory land councils, and following years of discussion and advocacy, the NLC is supporting 'YES' in favour of Constitutional recognition and an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

I urge everyone to make sure their enrolment details are up to date by visiting the AEC website, and to explore what the Voice could mean for them and their community.



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# Voices from the bush



"The Constitution is a country's birth certificate. It's the founding document of Australia, and for us not to be there from the beginning, is an injustice that needs to be corrected."

**Jerome Cubillo**  
*Chair of Larrakia Nation  
Aboriginal Corporation*



"The Voice is a decades long destination that the nation is arriving at, where Larrakia and other Aboriginal people from across the country have been calling for recognition as the First Nations peoples of this country, but also to have a say in the way that our lives are governed."

**Nigel Brown**  
*CEO Larrakia Development  
Corporation*



"I am voting YES because I think it's time for a change. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be recognised as the First Peoples of Australia."

**Patricia Chisholm**  
*Teacher*



"For my Voice, stand up and be counted. Vote YES!"

**Raelene Bulumbara**  
*Bagala Senior Traditional  
Owner*

## Who's reading Land Rights News?



David Hughes from Kulumindini



Grant Yulmiya Nundhirribala, lead singer of the band Yilila and cultural leader of the Red Flag Dancers

# Beetaloo - Setting the record straight

The Northern Land Council protects the interests of Traditional Owners in the Beetaloo Sub-basin.

THE NLC has a proud history of fighting for land rights and native title - representing Aboriginal interests in the Top End to governments, miners and other vested interest groups - supported by the robust governance of a Full Council comprising 78 elected members and five co-opted members.

## No single Aboriginal group speaks for the whole of the Beetaloo Sub-basin.

These Aboriginal councillors are chosen by the NLC's Aboriginal constituents and represent homelands, outstations and communities from across the NLC's seven regions.

The NLC performs its functions wholly in compliance with the statutory requirements under the governing Commonwealth legislation - the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth) and the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth).

When it comes to hydraulic fracture stimulation or 'fracking' (a method to extract natural gas from underground shale rock), there is a diversity of opinions among Territorians including a diversity of opinions among Aboriginal people and Traditional Owners (TOs) about whether this is a good thing or not.

Ultimately, the only people who should be speaking for, and making decisions on what activities occur on their country, are the recognised TOs and Native Title Holders of that country.

There are 27 approved native title determinations in the Beetaloo Sub-basin. Each determination describes and recognises the particular Aboriginal estate groups who hold native title rights and interests in different parts of the determination area.

The NLC is scrupulous in convening meetings and facilitating discussions to ensure all recognised Aboriginal estate groups who hold native title rights and interests

in areas where gas production activity is anticipated are involved in decision-making.

Between mid-September 2022  
(continued page 6)

## Who are 'Traditional Owners'?

Some media outlets and other commentators use the term "Traditional Owners" over-broadly in relation to any Aboriginal people from the general region who have a view on gas development in the Beetaloo Sub-basin.

Some use this term without any qualification, in a way that misleads and ignores the decision-making primacy of Traditional Owners or Native Title Holders.

When reporting this way, no further information is offered as to which area of country a person may speak for or which estate group the person is a member of.

The NLC recognises that some people who appear in media reports may have interests in the Beetaloo Sub-basin but may not necessarily have authority under traditional Aboriginal law and custom to make decisions or speak for those specific areas of country where gas production is anticipated.



The Beetaloo Sub-basin

and mid-April 2023, seventy-three (73) consultations with a total of 698 Native Title Holders and Traditional Aboriginal Owners were undertaken about the negotiation of potential new exploration or production agreements relating to the Beetaloo.

Under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, TOs have a kind of veto right regarding exploration proposals, although there is no second veto that could block mining once an exploration licence has been granted. However, the Native Title Act provides no veto for either exploration or production.

Native Title Holders can say "no", but the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) has the power to approve development activities even where this may override native title rights. Only a handful of applications to the NNTT have

succeeded in preventing a major mining or petroleum project from proceeding.

The only option is for Native Title Holders to negotiate as best they can in the face of massive power asymmetry, in the knowledge that regardless of what they want for their country, the mining or petroleum project in question is highly likely to proceed.

With this in mind, much of the criticism that is currently levelled at the NLC would be more appropriately directed at the native title legislation under which the NLC is required to operate.

Along with other land councils and native title representative bodies around Australia, the NLC has consistently advocated for law reform that gives First Nations people genuine rights to decide whether and how their country will be mined or drilled.

## I speak for my country

In a story published by the *National Indigenous Times* in June 2022 and republished with permission in the July edition of Land Rights News, Mudburra-Jingili man Jeremy Jackson, who lives in community in the Beetaloo Sub-basin, said working with industry was the best way to protect country and improve lives under current native title laws.

Mr Jackson is a spokesperson for his uncle, Terry Jackson, a senior Mangaya for the Bamarrnganja estate group (one of several Native Title Holder estate groups in the Beetaloo Sub-basin).

"Native title you say no, the government will actually go around, to the back door, and you say no, and you get all this mining mob coming in," he said.

"We say yes and then we get the benefit out of it and also we look after our country too as well, as well as our sacred sites."

"We want to work together with (Northern Land Council) and this mining company to protect our country, and our sacred sites."

Mr Jackson's comments were backed by fellow Mudburra-Jingili man Benjamin Ulamari, who said the gas company was giving jobs to anyone willing to work in Elliott and Marlinja communities.

"We want better opportunity, better education, better jobs for our people, (and) we'll decide that, not others."

You can read the full article published in the July 2022 edition of Land Rights News by scanning the QR below code or visiting the 'News and Publications' tab at [nlc.org.au](http://nlc.org.au)



Terry Jackson, Senior Mangaya for the Bamarrnganja esatte group

## What is native title?

On 3 June, 1992, the High Court of Australia delivered its landmark Mabo decision which recognised the native title rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and overturned the idea of terra nullius.

This was followed in late 1993 by the passage of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) which recognised that under Australian law, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have rights to land, water and sea, according to traditional laws and customs, that have existed since before colonisation.

These rights are acknowledged via native title.

Following the passage of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), native title determinations have described and recognised the particular Aboriginal estate (or "country") groups who hold native title rights and interests in different parts of the determination areas under relevant traditional laws and customs.

Determining which estate groups hold native title rights and interests can be a challenging process, with estate groups needing to prove a continuous system of law and custom that gives rights to the land, and demonstrate that these have been handed down from generation to generation since before colonisation.

When a native title determination is made, Native Title Holders must establish a corporation called a Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) to manage and protect their native title rights and interests.

The Native Title Act provides no veto for either mining exploration or production.

Native title is the weakest form of land tenure because Indigenous peoples' interests are too often secondary to mining and other extractive activities and land use.

# At the centre of Beetaloo Basin gas debate, Traditional Owners chart future for their communities

By Tom Zaunmayr

**It is a phrase often muttered when discussing Indigenous advancement in the modern age: learn to walk in two worlds.**

UNDERSTANDING how to benefit from western society while maintaining a strong connection to Country and culture is the crux of the phrase's meaning.

It is a phrase Mudburra-Jingili man Ben Ulamari has grappled with for a long time.

His family's lands are at the centre of one of the most public cultural and economic pinchpoints in Australia today; the debate over gas extraction in the Northern Territory's Beetaloo Basin.

Mr Ulamari has always been keen to show leadership, whether through his work with Origin Energy and Tamboran Resources, or back home in his Kulumindini (Elliott) community.

"I see myself as a role model for the community, to show that, yeah, we can get these type of positions, we can do those type of jobs in our own community, in towns," he said.

"I would like to lead as an example and then hopefully we can get more younger generation



Back row, L-R: Eddie Ulumari, Fred Godilla, Wallace Godilla, Ben Ulumari, Ralph Ulumari, Ann-Marie Dixon, Jeremy Jackson  
Front row, L-R: Louise Ulumari, Eric Cooper, Carlina Cooper, Vivienne Ulumari and Terry Jackson

Traditional Owners and locals involved in working and aiming for supervising and management positions or finance management positions and stuff like that.

"I am a strong believer in if you work traditional or local in a community and you have skill sets, it is good to go back and live in (the community) as an example."

Origin Energy senior hydrogeologist Peter Evans said Mr Ulamari's work was crucial to monitoring groundwater levels to ensure aquifers were not being drained.

"We have computerized data loggers that live down under the water table and record the water level continuously," he said.

"I think it's a real positive thing that we can have the Traditional Owners of the area getting benefit by working with the project and obtaining skills that are transferable."

The industry landscape has changed substantially in the basin in recent months, with Origin Energy flagging an intention to sell its interests in Beetaloo Basin to Tamboran Resources.

But the work continues, and Ben Ulamari reckons that the future has bright prospects for him, his family and his community.

Jingili man Fred Godilla is conflicted.

He knows mining can have adverse impacts on environment, but trusts the companies working on his Country are putting the right safeguards in place.

Mr Godilla wants to see opportunities for the young people of Kulumindini come out of industrial development, including jobs, housing and the opportunity to stay in their community.

Mr Godilla's sentiment is shared

by Mudburra-Jingili man Jeremy Jackson.

"Most of our Mudburra tribe be stuck with nothing, and now we are getting all these opportunities from these oil and gas companies moving forward," he said.

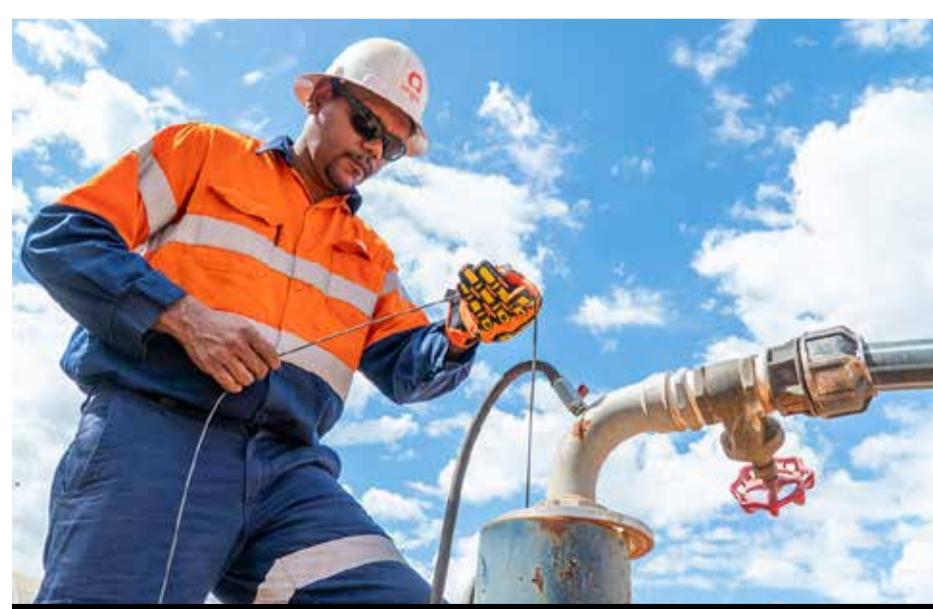
"A lot of our young people were sitting around doing nothing in Elliott, now they have some people working with the companies..

"We need all these work opportunities here because we got hardly nothing."

Work aside, Mr Jackson hopes the money flowing into town will solve one of Kulumindini's larger problems - a critical shortage of housing which leaves generations of family members living together.

**Note:** on 9 November 2022, Origin Energy Limited (Origin) publicly advised it had completed the sale of 100 per cent of its interest in the Beetaloo Basin joint venture to Tamboran (B1) Pty Limited.

**Tom Zaunmayr is the editor of National Indigenous Times. This article has been reprinted with permission.**



Mudburra-Jingili man Ben Ulumari

# Yunupingu, 30 June 1948 – 3 April 2023

By Chips Mackinolty



Yunupingu highlights Yolŋu and Balanda law

In remembering this extraordinary Aboriginal leader it is difficult to forget the meaning of his family name—Yunupingu—which in the Gumatj dialect of the Yolŋu Matha language family means “the rock that stands against time”.

ACROSS so many decades, Yunupingu's deeds and actions in the struggles for lands, seas, language and rights have surely reflected that sense of that name. From his father Mungurrawuy's campfire accounts of surviving being shot by Europeans in the 1920s, “by a man licensed to do so”, to becoming the longest serving member and Chairman of the powerful Northern Land Council to leading the Yothu Yindi Foundation and host of the annual Garma Festival, his passing leaves

an indelible mark far beyond the northeast Arnhem Land home of his people.

Born in 1948 at Gunyungarra on Melville Bay—across the waters from the aluminium mine and processing plant which was to dominate his and his peoples' lives for so many decades, he grew up on a beach in Yirrkala in “a series of humpies made out of bent iron and a mix of stringybark and paperbark”. It was the time of the arrival of Methodist missionaries at Yirrkala, arguably a blessing and protection

from the period of the “cattle prospectors and land thieves who hunted and killed Yolŋu women and children”.

Schooling at the Mission—insistently encouraged by his parents—followed by a two-year stint at a theological college in Brisbane, gave Yunupingu the English language, not to mention an introduction to the non-Yolŋu world. Not that, in a sense, he needed it. In 1963, as a 15-year old he had assisted in the drafting and translation of the 1963 Bark Petitions—the Yolŋu clans' unsuccessful attempt to stop mining at Gove.

From childhood—and indeed his whole life—Yunupingu was deeply schooled in and promoted traditional Law and religious practice through language, song

and dance. Heavily influenced by his father, but also by ceremonial leaders from other clans in the region, it was to be the backbone of his commitment over all his life.

The 1973-74 Whitlam-appointed Woodward Royal Commission—which followed a failure to win rights in the NT Supreme Court—transformed the landscape of the land rights struggle and launched Yunupingu's political career. In order to respond to the Royal Commission, he instigated the first meeting of Traditional Owners in Darwin in September 1973, and in so doing, formed the Northern Land Council. By 1976 the Aboriginal Land Rights Act was established, endorsed by Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser.

First as a field officer with the NLC in 1977, Yunupingu was elected

in that year as chair of the NLC—a position he held on and off until 2004, and as a member representing his people until 1998. Over that time—and beyond as the chair of the Garma Festival—he would meet and negotiate, and at times confront, Prime Ministers from Bob Hawke to Anthony Albanese. Along with Central Land Council chair Wenten Rubuntja, he embraced Hawke at the 1988 Barunga Festival—with the promise of a Treaty. When the Barunga Statement painting was displayed by Hawke it was met by a deep sadness, as he wrote in 2008:

*A few years later I travel to Canberra to hang a painting that was dreamed on that day: the Barunga Statement. I think that I am in Canberra for a celebration but it is a funeral—it is Bob's last day as prime minister and he sheds a tear as he hangs the painting. I am sure that his tears are for his own failure—we have no treaty; his promise was hollow and he has not delivered—but they are genuine tears from a genuine man who tried leadership and was caught out by politics.*

Yunupingu's preparedness to take on local and federal politicians was legendary, perhaps no more than the exchange between then-NT Chief Minister Shane Stone in 1996 when Stone dismissed an action by the NLC to take on his government over human rights. Stone's response was to dismiss Yunupingu as "just another whingeing, whining carping black". The response? "Just another redneck!"

Yunupingu went on to national

recognition: Australian of the Year in 1978; an AM in 1985 and an honorary doctorate from Melbourne University in 2015, not to mention being recognised by the National Trust as one of Australia's "100 Living National Treasures". In May 2017 Yunupingu was one of three Indigenous Australians honoured by Australia Post in the 2017 Legends Commemorative Stamp "Indigenous leaders" series to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum.

Yunupingu wrote in 2016 for *The Monthly*:

*I have lived my song cycle and I have done what I can to translate the concepts of the Yolŋu world into the reality of my life ... And of course, I have mixed feelings when I reflect on my life's work. I feel a deep sadness at times, yet I know that I have done much that is useful. I know that I have secured my family's birthright—we will not drift off with the tide; we will stand and endure, and our names will pass down through the decades and the centuries.*

Indeed the "rock that stands against time". As he said, it is now "for others to do the singing".

A "Voice" that should not be forgotten.

**This is an edited version of an article by Darwin-based writer and artist, Chips Mackinolty, who has worked for the NLC on and off from the 1980s to the present. It was first published in *The Guardian* 3 April 2023**



Presenting the Barunga Statement to PM Hawke, Barunga Festival 1988



Yunupingu and Roy Marika lead members of the Woodward Inquiry 1973



With Gumatj boys at Garma 2019. Image by Peter Eve, Yothu Yindi Foundation

# Activating Land and Sea Rights

THE NLC has developed a strategy to guide the organisation over the medium to long term through consultations with the chairperson, CEO, council members and senior managers.

Titled 'Activating Land and Sea Rights', the strategy is based on a phrase first used by the Council's former long-serving Chair, Yunupingu.

It aims to place the NLC in the best position as it transitions from an era of land claims and acquiring land for Traditional Owners (TO) to one where the focus is increasingly on 'activating' TO rights and interests in land and sea country.

Organisational changes associated with the new direction reflect the increasing size, scale and scope of the NLC's operations and regional footprint and include:

- The creation of a new Economic Strategy team and Strategic HR capability to enable effective implementation of Activating Land & Sea Rights.
- Establishment of 'Permits, Agreement and Compliance' team to ensure everyone meets their obligations to TOs through strict compliance with permits, section 19 agreements and licenses
- A new 'Partnerships and

Enterprise Development' team that will have carriage of priorities in relation to Parks/Joint Management, Carbon Project development, funding partnership development, nature repair market opportunity and other developments arising through a review of the Caring for Country branch, and

- A dedicated operational compliance team with a focus on permit and agreement compliance.

This strategic shift will be supported by the construction of a new head office precinct in Berrimah alongside the

development of contemporary operational hubs in Katherine and Nhulunbuy. As two of the NLC's busiest regional locations, strengthening the organisation's ability to assist constituents in Katherine and East Arnhem to realise land and sea country aspirations, is crucial.

"It's an exciting time for the NLC," the CEO said. "We have a great team who are ready to take on new challenges and support our elected arm and Chair, Dr Bush-Blanasi."

The following Activating Land and Sea Rights policy statement was endorsed by the 125th Full Council in June 2023.

## Activating Land and Sea Rights Policy Statement

The term 'activating land rights' was first used by Yunipingu, the NLC's former long serving Chairman, to describe the journey of Aboriginal people benefitting from their rights and interests in land, freshwater and sea country.

The NLC has a proud history fighting for land rights, being a strong advocate for Aboriginal people and fiercely independent. The NLC will build on this solid foundation, developed over the past 50 years, as it makes the transition from an era focused on the fight for land rights to one focused on activating those hard-won rights and interests in land, freshwater and sea country.

The purpose of this Statement is to describe what this means for Northern Land Council Members, staff, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people across our seven regions. This Statement has been developed in consultation with NLC Council Members.

We will activate land, water and sea rights by strengthening the things we currently do, and doing new things. These include:

- putting Traditional Owners first and understanding what Traditional Owners want for their country
- harnessing pride and strength in Aboriginal culture, innovation, creativity, skills, employment, intellectual property, economic development and entrepreneurship
- empowering Aboriginal corporations to take advantage of opportunities for economic development and wealth creation
- ensuring strict compliance with permits, section 19 agreements and licences and making sure everyone meets their obligations to Traditional Owners
- enforcing and advocating for better protection of sacred sites and heritage areas on land and water, working closely with AAPA to ensure confidentiality and exclusion zones
- creating opportunities for self-determination through Traditional Owner decision making, Ranger programs, expanded Indigenous Protected Areas, Learning on Country, Aboriginal-led township leasing, joint management of national parks, carbon farming and nature repair markets
- advocating and influencing policy on behalf of Traditional Owners, including creating sustainable homelands, remote housing, infrastructure and essential services, issues affecting Aboriginal cemeteries and morgues, repatriation of human remains and artefacts, water security, pastoral, agriculture, mining, tourism, carbon economy
- working with other organisations to promote the interests of Traditional Owners on issues outside NLC's core functions, like health, justice and education
- creating partnerships with peak bodies and other organisations to support investment in Aboriginal enterprise and business development on Aboriginal land
- strengthening NLC regions with more NLC staff close to where Traditional Owners live by implementing our Regionalisation Strategy 'Building the Bush'
- using evidence, data and best practice systems to support decision making based on free, prior and informed consent, and ensuring data sovereignty,
- and supporting cultural maintenance.

This Statement was endorsed by the 125th Full Council, at its meeting at Barunga, 5 June 2023

# Kenbi Rangers partnering the future

IT has been a big year for the Kenbi Rangers as demand for their Fee for Service (FFS) work continues to grow along with the skills and achievements of their team.

Based on the Cox Peninsula west of Darwin, the Kenbi Rangers formed in 2011. With the finalisation of the Kenbi land claim in 2016, opportunities have been unlocked for Traditional Owners (TO) to 'activate' their rights and develop a Healthy Country Plan to guide the work of the Rangers.

The FFS activities, carried out alongside regular ranger duties, include government and business contracts for environmental, fisheries and land management; survey work; research collaborations on sea country; management of sacred sites and

and culture," said Kenbi Ranger Coordinator Steven Brown.

One of the largest contracts to be delivered by Kenbi Rangers falls under a Service Level Agreement with Lithium Developments (grants) NT Pty who operate the Finniss Lithium Project south-west of Darwin.

This partnership is an example of how income made by rangers under FFS has been used to purchase assets which in turn provide greater income generating opportunities for the group and TOs. In this instance, equipment including a John Deere Slasher Tractor, a vehicle for female rangers and Cropland Spray Units to replace aging ones, are supporting better delivery of ranger duties and growing FFS activities.

"The Finniss project has given

## **"It's really inspiring to see the growth in the Rangers' skills and experience."**

visitor access to land trust areas. "Traditional Owners are partnering with government and business while continuing to maintain country

rangers more, and more varied, activities such as cultural heritage monitoring, the relocation of sensitive vegetation species, water



Rex Sing and Steven Brown

sampling and treatment, and general maintenance around project infrastructure," Mr Brown said.

"Rangers have needed to complete induction training before being admitted on the mine site, so it's providing additional skills, experiences and pathways to other

employment. One of our casual Kenbi Rangers, who originally started as a volunteer, is now working full time with one of the contracting companies involved with the Core Lithium Mine, so that's a great success we all share."



Jack Gardner, Ian McFarlane, Nadine Kurz, Steven Brown, John 'Mango' Moreen, Matt Beard and Rex Sing

# Blue Mud Bay: Celebrating Sea Rights

Celebrations are taking place for the fifteenth anniversary of the legal recognition of sea rights in the Northern Territory.

THE 2008 'Blue Mud Bay' High Court decision confirmed Traditional Owners (TOs) of Aboriginal-owned Northern Territory coastline, including that covered by the Anindilyakwa and Tiwi land councils, have exclusive rights regarding commercial and recreational fishing in tidal waters.

The court case was led by senior Djalkiripuyju TO, cultural leader and artist Djambawa Marawili AM.

"On 30 July 2008 the High Court of Australia recognised that our patterns, our designs, our song lines and our sand sculptures represent our strong and unbroken custodianship of the lands and seas," Mr Marawili said.

Celebrations marking the anniversary were held in July at Bäniyala, on the coast of Blue Mud Bay, 210kms south-west of Nhulunbuy.

NLC Chair Dr Bush-Blanasi acknowledged the strength and



Community members at Bäniyala in 2009

determination of Traditional Owners and the role the NLC continues to play as it supports TOs and Native Title Holders.

"As the NLC celebrates 50 years, the Blue Mud Bay decision is a reminder of the shoulders we stand on, the struggles we have fought, and our core value as an organisation that respects and supports the aspirations of Aboriginal custodians." Dr Bush-Blanasi said.

**"Our 'sea rights' is not about ownership, it is about vision – our vision as Djalkiripuyju to live, share and thrive on the country of our ancestors."**



Djambawa Marawili AM at Bäniyala in 2009

## New corporation activates land and sea rights

IN early 2020, the NLC assisted the Djalkiripuyju leaders to set up the Djalkiripuyju Aboriginal Corporation and continues supporting their journey to take on the functions of a Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) under the Native Title Act.

This is in line with the NLC's statutory obligations to act in accordance with the wishes of Native Title Holders who aspire to establish and operate their own viable PBCs. The process for designing the Djalkiripuyju PBC has involved extensive consultations with Native Title Holders across many remote communities.

"It takes a lot of work and time to set up a PBC and adhere to the strict requirements under the Act," the NLC Chair Dr Bush-Blanasi said. "But the NLC is committed to do this and respectfully respond to the legitimate direction of recognised land and sea custodians."

For the Djalkiripuyju, their future is firmly focused on activating their land and sea rights as they implement their corporation's comprehensive development strategy; negotiate agreements and partnerships with government and other organisations; and promote sustainable, community-based commercial development and employment opportunities.

"Our 'sea rights' is not about ownership, it is about vision – our vision as Djalkiripuyju to live, share and thrive on the country of our ancestors," Mr Marawili said.

"Our vision is shared through the sacred fire from Yathikpa. This fire represents our sovereign ancestral power and strengthens our voice from homelands to all peoples across Australia."



The Blue Mud Bay Sea Rights Flag designed by Donald Nuwandjali Marawili

# NLC women join national summit

More than nine hundred Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, sister-girls, non-Indigenous women and non-binary people from across Australia attended the inaugural Wiyi Yani U Thangani Summit on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country (Canberra).

WIYI Yani U Thangani means 'women's voices' in the Bunuba language from Western Australia's Kimberley region.

The three-day national gathering enabled First Nations women to speak on their own terms to government, policymakers and service providers about issues affecting them, their children and communities.

Attendees heard from a range of speakers, both young and older, on topics such as the Voice to Parliament, education, employment, law & order, violence, deaths in custody, child removal, early childhood and much more.

The NLC sponsored a number of female First Nations staff to attend including Nikita Baker, Lizzie Hogan, May Bury, Jamalia larwin, Summer Jeffrey, Nathalia Wauchope, Tedisha Bush, Jenna Wilkes, Teresa Burburr and Cindy Paterson.

Three members of the NLC delegation attended as youth representatives, taking part in a youth led forum on day one.

"Being around young women who wanted our voices to be heard made me feel like I was at the right place at the right time, never having to feel ashamed for sharing our worries and thoughts about wanting a change," said Tedisha Bush from the NLC Sea Country unit.

"We are the embodiment of planting seeds and nurturing trees for the next generation. It was a privilege having the opportunity to connect and listen to old and young women who were passionate about sharing their empowering stories and knowledge," Tedisha said.



# McArthur River Project compensation claim goes to trial

Over three weeks from 5th June to 23rd June this year, Justice Banks-Smith of the Federal Court of Australia oversaw the long-awaited trial in the McArthur River Project Compensation Claim.

IN this important case, Gudanji, Yanyuwa and Yanyuwa-Mara groups claim compensation for the negative impacts of the McArthur River Project on their native title rights and interests. The claim is brought against the Northern Territory. The Commonwealth Attorney-General is also participating.

The key legal events that the Native Title Holders refer to in their compensation claim are the

granting and re-granting of mineral leases and other interests in the McArthur River Project area by the Northern Territory Government. These grants were enabled by the *McArthur River Project Agreement Ratification Act 1992 (NT)*, which attempted to override the rights of Native Title Holders to negotiate an agreement in relation to the project.

The trial has been adjourned and will begin again in November

2023, when lawyers for the parties will be asked to make their closing submissions.

Once the trial is over, Justice Banks-Smith will consider all of the evidence and legal submissions, and arrive at a decision. The earliest time by which a judgment is likely to be handed down is the second half of 2024.

## High Court to hear Gunlom case

The High Court of Australia has agreed to hear an appeal by Traditional Owners, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) and the Northern Land Council about desecration of a Sacred

### Site at Gunlom Falls in Kakadu National Park.

THE appeal is against a decision of the NT Supreme Court which found that the Commonwealth Director of National Parks cannot be held criminally responsible for breaking Northern Territory sacred site laws.

In 2019, the sacred site – which can only be viewed by men who

have undergone ceremony – was exposed to the public when a walking track was built at Gunlom. The construction of the walking track differed to the designs approved by Traditional Owners (TOs) during consultations.

TOs have closed public access to Gunlom until the legal case is resolved.

Northern Land Council member and AAPA chair Bobby Nunggumajbarr said "Our

Aboriginal sacred sites and cultural heritage is important to the people of the Northern Territory and the nation."

"No one should be above the law. All people, all corporations and all government entities, should work with custodians to respect and preserve sacred sites."

A date for the appeal has not been confirmed, but is expected to be held in late 2023.

## Yunupingu foresight in Gove case

In May the NLC welcomed the decision of the Full Court of the Federal Court in the Yunupingu on behalf of the Gumatj Clan or Estate Group v Commonwealth case.

THE decision, which has since been challenged by the Commonwealth, is one step on what could be a long path to just compensation for the

bauxite mining on Yolŋu land in the Gove Peninsula. It confirmed that a range of acts historically undertaken on Yolŋu land did not extinguish native title rights.

The Federal Court also upheld the decision in *Wurridjal v Commonwealth* (2009) that property in the Northern Territory, including First Nation interests in land, cannot be compulsorily acquired without compensation.

The case was instigated by Yunupingu and is a poignant reminder of his foresight, tenacity and ongoing legacy.



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# Concern over NTG agribusiness strategy

The NLC has serious concerns about the NT Government's Agribusiness 2030 Strategy released in May, in particular the proposal to 'Change the permitted use of existing pastoral land tenure to include cropping and horticultural activities'.

"UNLESS the NTG provides Native Title Holders with a right to negotiate and other statutory protections, this proposed

**"Pastoral leases are for pastoral activities," Mr Martin-Jard said. "If you want to diversify the pastoralist estate, you need to consult on a case-by-case basis with the Aboriginal groups who own the country."**

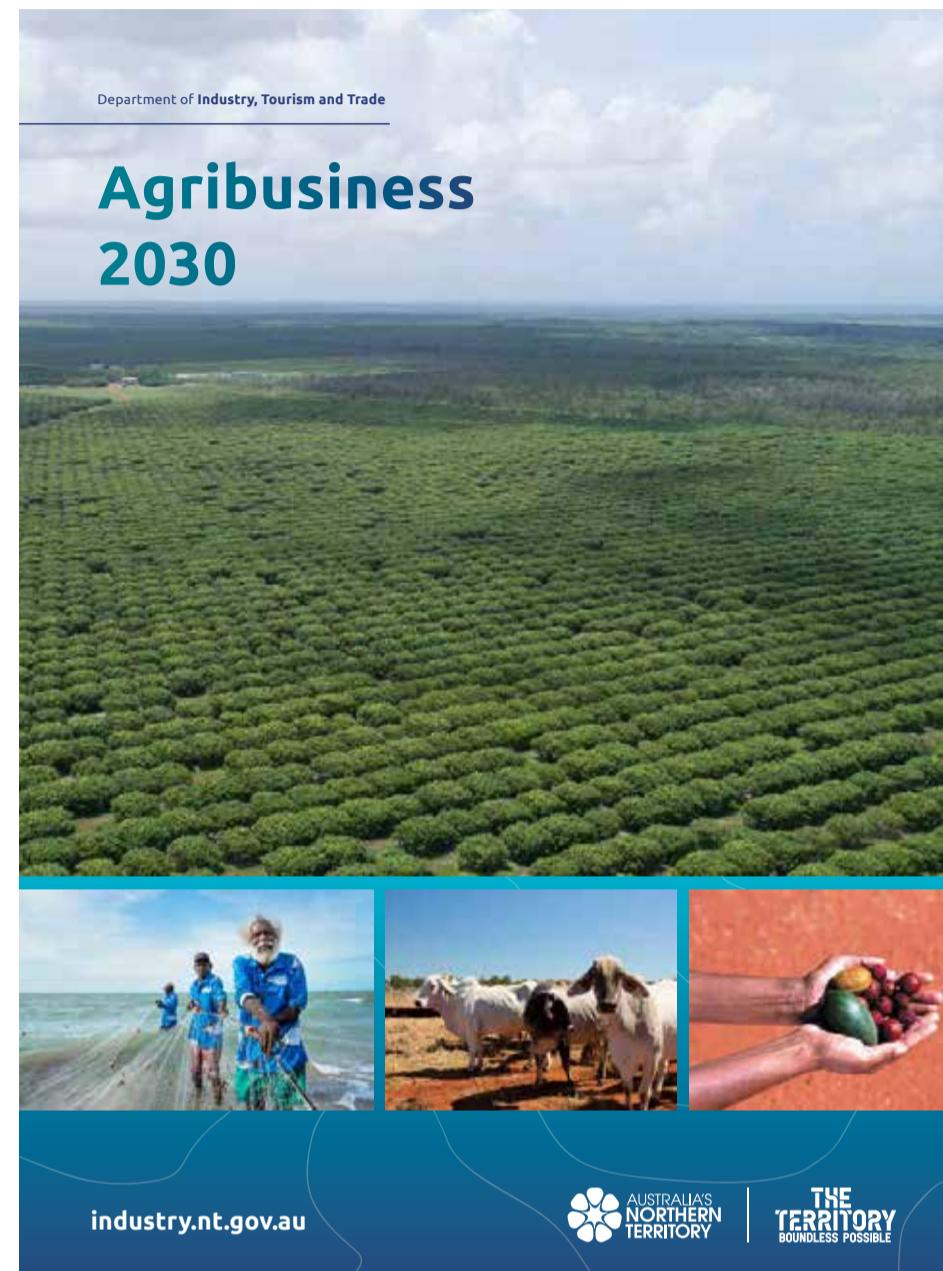
exploitation of the use of the pastoral estate for non-pastoral purposes will significantly impair native title rights," NLC CEO Joe Martin-Jard said.

Aboriginal land holders are significant stakeholders in the pastoral and agribusiness industries, with almost half of the NT land mass and 80% of its coast being

traditionally owned, and significant native title land and sea interests existing throughout.

Aboriginal people in the NLC's region have increasingly raised concerns about unsustainable water use and land being cleared on cattle stations, often to make way for cotton. The NLC has also highlighted risks to sacred sites because regulated clearances are not required as part of the land clearing application process.

Further worries about the Agribusiness 2030 Strategy include the proposal to reduce timeframes 'for obtaining land clearing and water licencing approvals'; and reference to environmental and cultural heritage regulation as being a 'challenge'.



"It is essential that any large-scale expansion of cropping and horticulture on the pastoral estate is well planned and well-regulated and, importantly, is undertaken through consultation with Native Title Holders," Mr Martin-Jard said.

"The NLC's open engagement with government and business reflects aspirations of Traditional

Owners (TOs) and Native Title Holders to increase economic opportunities. However, approaches like those outlined in the Agribusiness 2030 Strategy, where

the government has failed to fully consult, undermines goodwill and trust," Mr Martin-Jard said.

The NTG has now agreed to re-open consultation.

## TOS decide on future of social clubs

A number of section 19 applications regarding social clubs have been submitted by communities within the NLC region.

THE NLC remains neutral on individual land use proposals, including social clubs, and supports Traditional Owners (TOs) to make locally-led decisions about what is appropriate for their community and associated land use.

The section 19 agreement

process under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976* (Cth) (ALRA) gives TOs an opportunity to consider, develop terms and conditions, and the right to consent to or reject proposals on their land and seas. The NLC carries out the consultations and negotiations and must ensure that any land use proposal is fair and equitable.

Once all necessary statutory requirements have been satisfied in accordance with ALRA, the TOs and appropriate Aboriginal Land Trust are notified of the outcome.

In 2022 the Northern Territory Liquor Commission (NTLC) granted a liquor license for a social club

in the community of Barunga. It included a number of conditions, such as the need to ensure they had a suitable premise—in this instance a community store with planned renovations.

The applicants also needed to satisfy the NTLC the community store had a lease for the land on which it was situated, and that this lease allowed for the provision of alcohol.

The license comes with a number of requirements including limited hours of operation, the sale of mid-strength products and the availability of full meals.

In their decision, the NTLC

stated: *by fixing licence conditions, the Commission is engaged in creating 'regulatory settings', and by doing so the Commission seeks to establish an environment in which alcohol consumption will be responsibly managed and harms will be minimised.*

Alcohol-related harm is a significant health and social issue for Aboriginal communities. Appropriate, community-led measures should be applied to minimise associated risks with alcohol consumption and to provide support for those in need.

# Opinion Piece: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security Lauren Moss



In June of this year Cabinet attended the full council meeting of the Central and Northern Land Councils in Barunga, with representatives also in attendance from the Anindilyakwa and Tiwi Land Councils.

THE desire for water safety and supply, water management and water to grow and support important services in communities and homelands was presented to the Cabinet team with passion and concern.

Water underpins life and liveability and it has been a priority area for the Northern Territory Government over the last six years. Unlike other parts of Australia, our approach to water management and water decisions prioritises the environment and culture first and foremost, followed by water for drinking and public water supply. It is only after these needs are met that water is able to be allocated for commercial or development uses. This is the approach we want to maintain, and to further strengthen and modernise.

Over the last six years there have been significant changes to the way water is protected in the Territory. These have included new rules for water use by mining and gas companies, increased penalties and compliance measures, and specific opportunities for economic development through the establishment of the Aboriginal Water Reserve.

The current Aboriginal Water Reserve sets aside more than 57,000 megalitres of water for Aboriginal economic development or development partnerships. The volume will increase as new water allocation plans are declared, with at least 10% of the available consumptive pool being allocated to the Reserve where there is eligible Aboriginal land in the water allocation plan area.

The Government has also appointed a new Water Controller to make water license decisions - this is a decision maker independent of the Northern Territory Government. We have invested in detailed water studies in Wadeye, Gunn Point, Katherine and Western Davenport regions. These studies are in addition to the water studies and investigations undertaken by Power and Water, to identify new water supplies for communities and homelands.

I recently released the Draft Territory Water Plan, after comprehensive community feedback. This is the first time a whole-of-government, strategic, and long-term plan for our water has been in place in the Territory - and its importance cannot be overstated. Ensuring the right focus and balance of laws, science and technology are in place alongside appropriate avenues for community input are critical in relation to water security.

Access to safe drinking water for all communities in the Territory was the number one issue raised in consultation on the Water Plan, and this is reflected in its central focus. It commits to new safe drinking water legislation for water supplies in cities, communities and homelands. The legislation will be constructed to transparently provide information

on water quality and drive continuous improvement in our water services. Central to the new drinking water legislation is community involvement throughout the development of

**The Territory Water Plan seeks to enhance Aboriginal peoples' participation in water decisions and management plus better understand Aboriginal cultural values of water.**

management plans for drinking water. This will help communities learn more about their water supplies, and it will also help water providers and government understand what communities want and need.

The Government is also working to secure investment in remote water infrastructure. The \$28 million committed for water infrastructure in 2019 for remote communities continues to support capital upgrades to infrastructure, and we have also advocated for co-investment by the Australian Government through the National Water Grid Authority's \$150 million commitment to safe drinking water for First Nations communities. Funds received through this program will boost existing efforts through the Indigenous Essential Services program to replace, extend and innovate water in communities, particularly those we know are water stressed.

The current Water Act is over 30 years old. This Act will be replaced by new, contemporary legislation to govern how water resources are managed, protected and allocated in the Territory. This is an important reform area which will

consider fundamental issues such as the rights and responsibilities of water management, who should be involved in decisions about water allocations and the enforcement of water laws

and how this should occur, and provisions and inclusions in water planning, alongside express commitments to protect environmental and cultural values.

The government will work closely with peak Aboriginal bodies including Land Councils to deliver key actions. I will be working towards establishing an Aboriginal Water Security Advisory Council by the end of this year to provide me and the Northern Territory Government with advice on strategic water issues and support Aboriginal leaders in water governance.

I look forward to working with Aboriginal Territorians on these important issues and building better capacity for Aboriginal people to be involved in water decisions and management. I know that listening to Aboriginal voices about the Territory's water and responding together in a constructive manner is an essential part of ensuring equitable water security for future generations.



# Response to Minister Moss by NLC Chair, Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi

Water is one of the biggest concerns for Aboriginal people in the bush. It comes up at almost every meeting we hold – water quality, access and culture.

I was happy that Minister Moss came to the joint land council meeting and listened to what our members had to say about water.

**"The government needs to work with us on these things from the start and listen to what we have to say.**

**So far that has not been happening."**

I have heard the Minister's commitment to greater participation by Aboriginal people in water decision-making and management, to listening to our voices, and working with land councils and our constituents to resolve water issues.

Now I am waiting to see if the government's actions match their words.

If they are done well, things like Aboriginal Water Reserves, the

Territory Water Plan, changes to water laws, community drinking water management plans and the Aboriginal Advisory Council could bring important benefits for our people.

We are waiting for true engagement. When the government drafts a new policy, we are asked to comment on a final draft. Our feedback is cherrypicked.

Our messages are consistent - Country and cultural values must have legislated protections

attempt by the Northern Territory Government to undertake what are complex and culturally sensitive projects ordinarily done by the NLC according to its legislative responsibilities.

There is only one area in the NLC's region which has water in an Aboriginal Water Reserve. We have seen at Katherine, by the time a water plan is made, the water in the area has already been handed out and there is nothing left for Traditional Owners who want to set up a business on their land.

We look to the NT Government to be strong on water policy – we've heard words before. Now we need to see actions:

decisions about water use should be consistent with water allocation plans that have been developed with stakeholder advisory committees, including Traditional Owners

recognise the responsibilities Aboriginal people have to protect our country and respect the responsibilities the NLC has under the law

we would like to see the NT Government establish an independent Water Commission that includes Aboriginal representation to provide more balanced decision-making, and

the government needs an effective strategy to make sure there is water in Aboriginal Water Reserves. Water trading should not be allowed until there is enough water for the environment, culture and the Aboriginal Water Reserve.

We have heard about work being undertaken on water quality legislation. We are waiting for the final version of the 'surface water take' policy to be released later this year. We will judge NTG on these projects.

The NLC wants to work in partnership with the government to ensure Aboriginal Territorians are fairly represented and robustly contribute to the management of water on their Country.

Let's wait and see whether the NT Government will strengthen the way they work with Aboriginal people – not just in words but actions.

## Subscribe to LAND RIGHTS NEWS

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# Indigenous Voice to Parliament

# VOTE YES



## A Voice for our people and our future

In late 2023 the Australian Government will hold a referendum based on the recommendations of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. All Australians of voting age will be asked if First Nations people should be recognised in the Constitution, with a Voice. If this vote, or referendum, is successful it will do two things:

- give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their history recognition in the Australian Constitution; and
- establish a Voice to Parliament, which will give Indigenous Australians a platform to advise the government on laws and policies that affect Indigenous people.

The position of the NLC is that a 'YES' outcome will ensure a better future for our people, our communities and our culture.

We ask Australia to stand with us. It's time the Voice of Aboriginal people is heard on matters that affect our lives.

### The Question

The referendum question will be asked in the following way:

**"A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve of this alteration?"**

### What is the Constitution?

The Constitution outlines the rules by which Australia is governed, and can only be changed through a referendum.

The Constitution is difficult to change and putting the Voice in the Constitution makes it strong. It will mean future Australian governments cannot shut down our Voice.

### What is the Voice?

The Voice will be a committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who will give advice to the Parliament and Government on issues that affect their community. It will include Indigenous Australians from every state and territory, the Torres Strait Islands and representatives from the regions and remote communities.

Members of the Voice will be chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their local area and serve for a fixed period.

The Voice will:

- empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community voices
- be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- value all voices and views
- be informed by culture, and
- include young people

If the referendum passes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will be consulted on who they want to represent them as part of the Voice.

### Why is the referendum happening?

Australia has been talking about recognising First Nations people in the Constitution for more than a decade.

Between 2016-17, twelve 'Regional Dialogues' took place in Darwin, Ross River, the Torres Strait Islands, Cairns, Brisbane, Dubbo, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide and Perth.

These 'Dialogues' were attended by local Indigenous leaders and representatives.

Following the Regional Dialogues, more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across the country came together in 2017 and wrote the Uluru Statement from the Heart. It called for a Voice for First Nations people to be added to the Constitution.

## YOU NEED TO VOTE IN THE REFERENDUM!

If you are an Australian citizen and aged 18 years or older, you:

- must be on the electoral roll, and
- must vote.

If you need to enrol, update your details or are not sure if you are enrolled, scan the QR code or visit [aec.gov.au](http://aec.gov.au)



### What will the Voice do?

The Voice will speak to the Government and Parliament about issues that affect the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Australian Government will then make laws and policies and decide if they will take into account the suggestions of the Voice.

Initially, the Voice will be asked to respond to four main priority areas:

- health
- education
- jobs, and
- housing.

Voice representatives will listen to community leaders on the best ways to improve these areas and take that advice to the Australian Government.

Indigenous Australians will have a direct line to the government to tell them the right way to help our people and communities.

# It's time take control of our future

By Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi



Chair, Tiwi Land Council Gibson Farmer Illortaminni; Deputy Chair, Anindilyakwa Land Council Thomas Amagula; Chair, Central Land Council Matthew Palmer; Prime Minister Anthony Albanese; Chair, Northern Land Council Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi; Attorney General Mark Dreyfus; Minister Linda Burney; CLC's Josie Douglas, Marion Scrymgour MP

**There is a referendum coming soon - the referendum asks us to decide – do we want to have a say in the policies and legislation that control our lives?**

I will be voting 'YES' at the referendum this October so that Indigenous Australians can have a voice on issues that affect them.

I encourage all of our mob to vote yes too.

In June the Northern, Central, Tiwi and Anindilyakwa land councils gathered in Barunga, and presented the Barunga Declaration to the Minister for Indigenous Australians.

In the same month I travelled to Canberra with representatives from each council to deliver the Barunga Declaration directly to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

This Declaration invites all

Australians to "right the wrongs of the past and deal with the serious issues impacting First Nations peoples...and unite our country."

Our 2023 Barunga Voice Declaration builds on the Barunga Statement presented 35 years ago by our former Chair Yunupingu to Prime Minister Hawke, asking the government to recognise the rights of Indigenous Australians.

Now is the time for us to be recognised.

Our communities are still reeling from the damage caused by the Intervention. It was forced on us with no consultation.

## Community people know what is best for their communities.

The Local Government Act enacted by the Territory government, which formed the 'super shires', stripped communities of decision-making and resources.

Living with the consequences of these government policies

continues to be difficult for remote communities.

These and countless other so-called 'solutions' were devised and enacted with little to no input from us, the people that they affect.

This is where the Voice will be different. It will give us a seat at the table to tell the decision makers what we need. Our people and our voice will be constitutionally recognised, no one will be able to take it away from us.

We will have representatives from each of our communities who will tell the government what we need.

Now is the time for voices from the bush to be heard.

The Learning on Country (LoC) Program integrates 'both ways' learning into remote secondary school curriculums. Schools work hand-in-hand with their local

Ranger group to teach our children about their Country. The Program is an example of our voices talking to the government and telling them what we need for our children to be educated the right way, to be able to walk in two worlds, the Traditional way and the western way.

There needs to be more funding for these programs. There needs to be more policies and programs which listen to community.

The Voice isn't going to change our lives straight away. The fine detail of what that Voice will look like and how it will operate still needs to be figured out once the referendum is passed. That process will take some time, and that's OK. We will get there in the end.

The important thing is that our children, our grandchildren and our future generations will have a voice to speak loudly and tell Australia what they need for their future.

Vote YES.

# "It's not about division" - A voice for homelands

Some people spend their lives giving back to their people – NLC Councillor Yananymul Mununggurr is one of them.



NLC Councillor and homelands advocate Yananymul Mununggurr

DJAPU woman Yananymul Mununggurr has devoted many years fighting to improve the lives of Yolŋu people, especially those living in homelands and outstations, teaching djamakuli (children) culture and how to walk strong and be confident in two words.

Yananymul was ten years old when senior Yolŋu leaders decided to move from missions, including Yirrkala, back to their traditional clan lands and sea country.

She was a young woman of twenty when Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation was set up to work with government to provide infrastructure and services to these traditional homelands and protect the rights of their residents. She has been associated with 'Laynha' – as a book-keeper, as the CEO, and a Director – ever since.

"I don't live in a city," Ms Mununggurr said.

"I live in a homeland. That's where I come from. I live at a very, very remote part of the Northern Territory.

"For me, personally, I'm in favour of the Voice. The Voice is very important for Aboriginal people across Australia.

"People like me, you know, we've been constantly dealing with

governments when it comes to the funding for homelands. And it's been hard, it's been hard. That's why this Voice campaign is something I support and its very important for people like me living at a homeland.

"It is a stepping stone for Aboriginal people to have the right to talk to government, at the government level, whether it be the Territory government or the Federal government, and to leave out that 'middle man'.

"(The Voice), it is something I need to see happen at the grass-roots level. When I mean grass-roots, people don't understand how we live out at the bush. If everybody can recognise the fact that there are Aboriginal people living in the homelands, we need to see that relationship working together going forward. Hand in hand. And it's very important for all of us and for the sake of all our children.

"All that I want to see and all that I am interested in is all of us working together as Australians.

"It's not about division, that's not how I see it. It's not about taking control of the government, no, it's not. It is about governments working in partnership with Aboriginal people all across Australia."



NLC and CLC members sign copies of the Barunga Voice Declaration (Yananymul Mununggurr watching centre)

# 2023 Barunga Voice Declaration

ON 15 June the four Northern Territory Aboriginal land councils signed the Barunga Voice Declaration that addresses all Australians and urges them to support a Voice to Parliament

More than 200 representatives of the Northern, Central, Tiwi and Anindilyakwa land councils gathered on the traditional lands of the Bagala (Jawoyn) group at Barunga, south-east of Katherine for the significant occasion.

Land council members signed five copies of the Declaration, one for each land council and a copy that was presented to the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP.

In the following weeks, representatives of the four land councils travelled to Canberra to formally deliver the Declaration to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

The 2023 Barunga Voice Declaration calls "for the recognition of our peoples in our still young constitution by enshrining our voice to the parliament and executive government, never to be rendered silent with the stroke of a pen again".

It invites all Australians to "right the wrongs of the past and deal with the serious issues impacting First Nations peoples...and unite our country".

Together, the land council members speak with the authority as the elected representatives of tens of thousands of grass roots residents of remote communities, homelands, town camps and towns across the Territory.

The 2023 Barunga Declaration is a strong and heartfelt call 'from the bush' asking all Australians to support First Nations people "for a better future".

The Declaration pays homage to the original Barunga Statement design and honours the cultural leaders who created it in 1988 (listed below), including sole survivor, pre-eminent artist Mr Djambawa Marawili AM.

1988 Barunga Statement artwork was created by:

- **Yunupingu AM**, 1948-2023, Gumatj
- **M Marawili**, c.1937-2018, Madarrpa
- **B Marawili**, 1944-2002, Madarrpa



The Barunga Voice Declaration

- **D Marawili AM**, 1953, Madarrpa
- **D Ngurruwuthun**, 1936-2001, Munyuku
- **D Ngurruwuthun**, c. 1940-2001, Munyuku
- **W Rubuntja AM**, c. 1926-2005, Arrernte
- **L Turner Jampijinpa**, 1951-2009, Warlpiri
- **D Williams Japanangka**, 1948-2013, Warlpiri

The original Barunga Statement was presented to Prime Minister Bob Hawke at the 1988 Barunga Festival by the Northern and Central land councils as a declaration of the aspirations of 'the Indigenous owners and occupiers of Australia' and a request to the Australian Government and people to 'recognise our rights'.

We are still waiting.

## The Barunga Declaration

We, members of the four Northern Territory Aboriginal land councils, acknowledging our elders and old people, have gathered again at Barunga, the site of the historic Barunga Statement in 1988 and the Barunga Agreement in 2018, with pride in our own laws, cultures and ceremonies, looking to the future.

We, who have been dispossessed and subjected to punitive controls by governments, who have never ceded sovereignty over our lands and waters, resolve with one heart our determined support for the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full.

We must right the wrongs of the past and deal with the serious issues impacting First Nations peoples, empower First Nations peoples and unite our country.

We call for the recognition of First Nations peoples in our still young constitution by enshrining our voice to the parliament and executive government, never to be rendered silent with the stroke of a pen again.

We need to be heard and urge our fellow Australians to stand with us and vote 'YES' in the forthcoming referendum, for the sake of a better future for all of us.

# The Hon Linda Burney MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB - 5 July 2023

## 'Unfinished Business'

Ballumb Ambul Ngunnawal and Ngambri yindamarra. Ngadu – yirra bang marang. In the language of my people, the Wiradjuri – I pay my respects to the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people – and honour their custodianship and care for country. And I extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here from all points of the southern sky.

I also want to acknowledge: Ged Kearney, Rachel Stephen Smith, Marcus Stewart, Geraldine Atkinson, Prof Brian Schmidt. And our Ambassador for First Nations people – Justin Mohammad, Happy NAIDOC Week everyone.

In his landmark speech 'Beyond the Mourning Gate' delivered in 2000, the 'father of reconciliation' and my dear friend Senator Patrick Dodson used the term "unfinished business". The "unfinished business" of our failure to recognise Indigenous Australians who had coexisted on this continent for more than 65,000 years.

Now, 122 years after the Australian Constitution was formed, more than 80 years since William Cooper's petition, 35 years since the Barunga Statement, 30 years since Keating's Redfern speech, 16 years since Howard promised a referendum on recognition, 15 years since the Apology, 13 years since the expert panel on Constitutional Recognition, 6 years since the Uluru Statement from the Heart – the question must surely be asked? How much longer do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to wait for recognition? When will we finally resolve this 'unfinished business'?

As Pat Anderson says: "Let's finish the unfinished business between us all." If not now, when?

We are so close. Our destination is on the horizon. We are just a few short months away from realising the promise of the Uluru Statement – that historic First Nations consensus on the way forward. Where 250 Indigenous elders and leaders gathered in the red dirt at Uluru to issue the Statement from the Heart. The idea of constitutional recognition through a Voice is what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves have asked for, not the government.

Later this year, Australians will be asked a simple question: Do you support a change to the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice? Yes or No.

Canada recognised its First Nations people in the 1980s. In New Zealand the Crown recognised the Maori people as far back as the 1840s. In 2023, it's time for Australia to recognise Indigenous Australians.



Hon Linda Burney MP speaks at Barunga Community, June 2023

The first question I want to address today is – why is the Voice needed? And the simple answer is: because the gap isn't closing fast enough.

For too long governments have made policies for Indigenous Australians, not with Indigenous Australians. We need the Voice to change that. We need the Voice because we need to work in partnership with communities. We need the Voice because we need to do better. And we particularly need to do better by young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

More than half of all Indigenous Australians are under the age of 25. But our young people don't start on a level playing field.

They need hope. They need opportunities their parents and Elders didn't have – they need a Voice.

Consider this. Stand in these shoes – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are around 55 times more likely to die from rheumatic heart disease than non-Indigenous people.

These deaths are completely preventable with access to medical care, proper housing and clean running water. Indigenous young people are 24 times more likely to be locked up than their neighbours.

In the words of the Uluru Statement: "We are not an innately criminal people".

First Nations children represent 37% of all children who have been removed from their parents, but make up only 6% of Australia's children. This number is unacceptably high. And yet the number of Indigenous children living in out of home care, away from their families, is expected to double in the next 6 years. This cannot be because we have no love for them.

Our people are more likely to have experienced homelessness than to hold an undergraduate degree. And in 2020, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people locked-up in a prison cell was four times as many as those who celebrated graduating Uni that year. Four times as many of our people with despair rather than hope for their future.

Does this mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have no aspirations and dreams for a better future? Of course not. This is systemic and structural disadvantage. The suicide rate for our people is almost twice the rate of our fellow Australians. All these numbers sometimes obscure the fact that this is about people.

Real people. Real people with families and loved ones.

Real people like Michael Riley. Michael grew up in poverty in Dubbo during the 1960s. And spent time on the Talbragar Aboriginal Reserve, an overcrowded place with terrible conditions and medical care was almost non-existent. Like so many others who were forced to live in those poor conditions, Michael suffered from chronic infections and got Rheumatic Fever – a condition from which his immune system never recovered.

Michael became a renowned photographer and his work was shown throughout the world. At the peak of his career at the age of 44 he died of end stage renal failure. I was very close to him. I visited him every day in hospital. I watched him go blind in one eye. His Aboriginality condemned him to an early death. A preventable death.

I remember being at his bedside with his cousin Lynette when he passed...I remember the injustice of it. And it's what still motivates me to this day. It's what motivates me every day to put one foot in front of the other. To do better by Indigenous Australians. To do better for future generations.

We can and we must do better. Just last month we saw new data that shows that just 4 out of 19 closing the gap targets are "on track". Just 4 out of 19 –

- Life expectancy - "not on track"
- Indigenous babies born with a healthy birthweight – "not on track"
- Finishing Year 12 – "not on track"
- Housing – "not on track"
- Indigenous people engaged in a job or training – "not on track"

If we needed any more evidence that more of the same isn't good enough – this is it.

## **"We have to do things better. And I honestly believe the Voice can help. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose by supporting the Voice."**

The Voice will be mechanism for government and parliament to listen. It will be like a resource of local knowledge and solutions that can help us make better policies.

The great leader of the Gumatj clan of North East Arnhem Land - the late Yunupingu once said: "They do not listen because they do not have to."

It was the truth. Government doesn't have to listen. Whether it be at the local, state or federal government.

My predecessor, Ken Wyatt put it well, reflecting on his time as Minister, when he said: "On key areas of health and education, I saw no reflection of Aboriginal input into discussions that led to legislation being put to the Parliament and the party room."

The Voice is about advice. Since 1967 when the Commonwealth gained powers to make laws for Aboriginal people. Governments have tried to develop some sort of consultative mechanism. And many haven't worked.

The second question I want to answer today is "how will the Voice work?"

First, let's be clear about what the Voice is. How it will help to deliver a better future, and do better than past bodies.

The Voice will be an independent representative advisory body – made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Voice will be nimble, efficient, and focused on making a practical difference. This is what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have asked for – to be heard. It will be chosen by local communities, for local communities.

The Voice will give independent advice to parliament and the government on the issues affecting Indigenous communities. This will lead to better outcomes, because we know that listening to people from the grassroots level leads to better outcomes. The Voice will provide independent advice for better decisions.

It will empower local voices – every state and territory, the Torres Strait Islands and remote communities will be represented.

It will be gender balanced and include the views of young people.

It will consult with local communities.  
It will be accountable and transparent.  
And it will co-operate with existing organisations.

One question, I'm sometimes asked is: Why does the Voice need to be in the Constitution? Why can't it just be legislated?

There are two main reasons:

- One. A Voice or representative body cannot be truly independent or give frank advice if the government of the day can abolish it with a stroke of the pen.
- Two. It's what First Nations people requested in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The starting point for reconciliation has to be listening to the wishes of Indigenous people. The starting point cannot be a political fix made in Canberra.

That's not real reconciliation. Let me give you three examples of how the Voice will work, in a practical way.

Practical, practical, practical.

Let's say a local community identifies a problem, like low school attendance. The community identifies that this is a challenge and wants to explore local solutions to improve school attendance. So the community approaches their representative on the Voice and raises this issue with them. The Voice then has the power to make representations on how to improve school attendance in that local community to government and the parliament.

Let me give you another area where I think the Voice can

## **"It's about linking up that local decision-making and local knowledge with policy-makers in government."**

make an important practical difference.

The community development program or CDP. CDP was designed in 2015 – it was meant to be an employment and training scheme that also contributed to remote communities. CDP supports around 40,000 people across 1,000 communities.

In recent years it has been a failure. It's been criticised for not being responsive to local communities and actually standing in the way of jobs and economic development. Because a one size fits all policy simply didn't work across 1,000 communities. Residents of remote communities have told me they want skills to work as mechanics, and to run a local butcher or bakery.

But despite asking for this, despite wanting to work and to improve their community, governments have failed to listen. I believe the Voice can play a key role in helping to fix CDP, to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

We know listening works. We know it delivers practical outcomes.

Let's take another example - birthing on country.

Aboriginal Community Controlled health organisations have pioneered a more effective way of caring for mums and babies. One that embraces tradition and language so mothers feel safe accessing medical services early and often. And by respecting and elevating the role of the extended family.

Birthing on Country sets mums and babies up for a healthy beginning. It works. Achieving a 50 per cent reduction in pre-term births.

In the words of my friend, Julian Leeser: "(The Voice) can help us to understand better what's going on.

- On the ground and help ensure that better policy is made that's more responsive to community."

Or to put it another way, doctors get better outcomes when they listen to patients.

Bosses get better outcomes when they listen to workers.

Policy-makers get better outcomes when they listen to First Nations communities.

Much has been made of the pro-active representations the Voice will make to Parliament and the Government – bringing the priorities of local communities to Canberra will be incredibly important.

So will be the requests Government makes of the Voice. This will be a step-change in our ability to deliver evidence-based policy. Policy that is supported by community, and makes a practical difference.

From day one – the Voice will have a full in-tray. I will ask the Voice to consider four main priority areas:

- Health
- Education
- Jobs
- And housing.

The Voice will be tasked with taking the long-view.

Unlike government, it won't be distracted by the 3-year election cycles.

It will plan for the next generation, not the next term.

It will be focused on making a better future for the next generation.

The time to make a generational difference is now.

We live in an aging country – overall, less than a third of Australians are under 25. However, that rises to more than half for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In the decades ahead, the cost and the consequences of repeating the same mistakes – will be amplified.

So too will the benefits if we listen, and do things better.

We want the Voice to come up with fresh ideas. Fresh ideas than can guide us over the long-term.

As the Minister, when I meet with the Voice for the first time I will say:

- Bring me your ideas on how to stop our people from taking their own lives.
- Bring me your ideas on how to help our kids go to school and thrive.
- Bring me your ideas on how we make sure our mob live strong and healthy lives...

How we ensure more people have jobs – with the independence and purpose that brings... How we strengthen culture and language... How we support families better ... How we keep alive our 65,000 years of culture and make it stronger...

I will be asking the Voice for their input to solve these most pressing issues. So, there will be important work in the Voice's in-tray from day one. It's not going to be a passive advisory

body. I want it to be active and engaged.

We need new perspectives to old challenges – perspectives that are connected to communities. We need ideas that come from the people on the ground.

We need a Voice.

As my trailblazing sister, June Oscar puts it: "An Indigenous body gives us an opportunity to... elevate our voices in a country where we occupy a space on the fringe of government policy."

A voice gives us the ability to address Parliament directly through our connections to our communities and regions."

I also want to say a few words about the 'No' campaign. The 'No' campaign is being run by the group called 'Fair Australia'. It is importing Trump-style politics to Australia. It is post-truth. And its aim is to polarise. Its aim is to sow division in our society by making false claims – Including that providing advice to Government would somehow impact that fundamental democratic principle of one-vote, one-value. A claim designed to mislead.

My social media often attracts trolls who accuse me of things like trying to set up an "apartheid state". Last month, Pauline Hanson went on radio and said that she, in her own words, once knew a "true black". As if to suggest there are some people more deserving of their Indigenous identity than others.

To describe the remarks as offensive and wrong would be an understatement. Yet no one in the media reported it. No one called it out.

Do not let them get away with it. Do not let the 'No' campaign get away with using Trump-style politics in Australia. Do not let them divide us.

The proposed change is constitutionally sound and legally safe – I know it doesn't suit the narrative of the 'No' campaign – but the Solicitor General – who was appointed by the now Shadow Attorney General – has given clear advice that recognition through a Voice is: "...not just compatible with the system of representative and responsible government... but an enhancement..."

The Voice builds on well-established principles and practices – and standards of accountability and transparency.

It will help improve the quality of government spending – better programs for better outcomes.

Friends, voting "Yes" at the referendum will be a vote to unify and strengthen Australia. Voting "Yes" will be an act of patriotism. An act of your belief in Australia.

We are the greatest country in the world.

And we can be even greater if we recognise Indigenous Australians.

One of the best things about modern Australia – is that so many of us welcome those who come from across the sea to make a new life here. I see it in my own multicultural community of Barton. We rightly take great pride in welcoming waves of migration over the decades.

And generation after generation of migrants have come to this country because they want a better life for themselves and their family.

It is the great Australian story. But not everyone has enjoyed those same opportunities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not enjoyed those same opportunities –

The gap isn't closing. Disadvantage and discrimination persist.

The good news is that later this year we will all get the chance to do something better. Together, we can build a better future that recognises Indigenous Australians rightful place in this country.

A better future that genuinely listens to the needs and aspirations of Indigenous Australians. As the Prime Minister said at Garma last year: "In years to come, we will be able to measure the success of the Voice not just by the number of people who vote for a Voice...but by the lives that the Voice helps to change. The communities it empowers, the opportunities it creates, the justice it delivers, the security it will bring to First Nations people around our country."

"Yes" to the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

## **"Friends, history is calling us. And I hope more than anything that the answer is 'Yes'."**

"Yes" to a Voice to Parliament.

And "Yes" to a Better Future.

I want to conclude by quoting a passage from the Uluru Statement from the Heart:

"Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people.

Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates.

This cannot be because we have no love for them.

And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers.

They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem.

This is the torment of our powerlessness.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country.

When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish.

They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country."

Friends, it's time.

Ngali Yarhagi barrranjrra, Manwunbul. Let's get this done, together.

# Walking strong in two worlds – developing our future leaders

The Learning on Country Program (LoC) is a joint initiative between Aboriginal Ranger groups and 17 schools across the Top End, which engages Indigenous students in remote areas of the NT through education, with a focus on 'both ways' learning within their secondary school curriculums.

THE 'two toolbox approach' incorporates both Western and

Indigenous knowledge systems to deliver culturally appropriate education and training for remote students' learning and employment pathways, with a strong focus on intergenerational transfer of culture and traditional knowledge.

The LoC Program is delivered with a key focus on the senior secondary student cohort, although younger students may also participate. The teaching and learning programs are developed collaboratively between the community's school and Ranger staff, with a focus on on-country learning which is planned and delivered in partnership with Traditional Owners (TOs).

Last year, LoC celebrated its 10th anniversary. Underpinning the ongoing success of the

**It's the combination of curriculum and culture that builds the skills, confidence and capacity of our future leaders to walk strong in two worlds**

LoC Program is the emphasis on Indigenous governance and community ownership of the program, which is ensured through the guidance and directives of an all Aboriginal Steering Committee, in collaboration with a local LoC Committee which operates in each of the sites.

The LoC Program is delivered in Maningrida, Milingimbi, Yirrkala, Laynhapuy Homelands, Galiwin'ku, Ramingining, Gapuwiyak, Umbakumba, Milyakburra, Gunbalanya, Ngukurr, Numbulwar,

Borroloola, Beswick, Barunga and Angurugu and Alyangula.

You can also find out more by scanning the QR code or visiting [www.learningoncountry.com/](http://www.learningoncountry.com/)



# Celebrating success at Yirrkala Bilingual School

**Students, families, Dhimurru Rangers and community members attended the recent graduation ceremony at Yirrkala Bilingual School.**

THE school celebrated and recognised the achievements of Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) graduate Mayatili Mungunggur and Cert II Conservation and Ecosystem Management Graduates Galpawiri

Munungiritj, Djamut Brian and Mithili Wanambi, all students of the Learning on Country Program.

Yirrkala Bilingual School is one of the foundation schools of the Learning on Country program. The school teaches all classes in both English and Yolŋu and is seeing great success in participation and engagement from both students and parents.

Yirrkala School Co-Principal Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr said it was a very proud day for the school and the whole community.

"Today was a special day for Mayatili, she was the only child

of this age in Yirrkala and she graduated by herself. She worked very hard, she was committed and studied very hard by herself to

graduate today. To be able to see that was wonderful, and I am so proud."



L-R Co-Principals Katrina Hudson and Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr, Mayatili Mungunggur, Galpawiri Munungiritj and LoC Coordinator Dan McLaren

# Shared knowledge, shared learning

**Learning on Country students from Umbakumba, Alyangula, Numbulwar, Bickerton, and Angurugu Schools came together during term two of this year for a joint camping trip, providing an important opportunity to learn from Elders, and from each other.**

taught in Anindilyakwa by the Traditional Owners. Sarah Honey from Arc Women - a combination of knowledge and health modalities providing holistic care to women's health - participated in the camp as a Women's Health facilitator, working with the senior women

to co-design the health-related teaching activities and delivery. Learning on Country activities focus on engaging local community members and organisations and these partnerships are key to Learning on Country Program success. It provides the students

with an opportunity to learn about local environment, customs, cultures and history while developing social, communication, numeracy, and literacy skills, on Country and back in the class room.



Students combine technology with culture

STUDENTS followed closely as senior Elders showed them how to find turtle eggs using traditional methods, as well as learning lots of life skills during the camp.

The camp provided a women's only space where lessons can be taught safely to the young girls, and facilitate intergenerational teaching of cultural knowledge.

Women's activities have been designed to assist the senior women in delivering their teachings and help alleviate any uncertainty or shyness amongst the girls when talking about a wide range of subjects.

The aim of addressing these sometimes difficult and restricted topics, is to provide the girls with knowledge and empowerment in understanding their health.

Other cultural information, such as identifying and collecting bush plants, was also part of camp teaching and activities.

The information was primarily

# Jobs on offer for senior students at Borroloola School Careers Fair

The Learning on Country Program at Borroloola School Careers Fair provided an opportunity for the community to get together to promote regional job opportunities for senior school students who will be job ready at the end of this year.

A number of Territory based organisations attended on the day to promote workplace training, job opportunities or career pathway options for senior students.

Local Learning on Country Program Coordinator Stephanie Anderson said that many of the senior cohort have completed various VET certificates and competencies through the Learning on Country program throughout the year and are now ready to pursue new job opportunities on completion of the school year.

"The jobs expo was a great opportunity to engage with the Borroloola community and potential job seekers in a relaxed and informal setting and talk about any current or future job opportunities available for our senior students. We also delivered workshops and demonstrations throughout the day."

Borroloola has three ranger groups including Garrwa, Waanyi Garrwa Rangers and Li-Anthawirriyarr Sea Rangers, who regularly work with the

school to support Learning on Country Program activities and outcomes.

In addition to jobs in conservation and land management with ranger groups, a number of other job and training opportunities were showcased at the careers fair through organisations such as the Northern Land Council, Health Clinic, John Moriarty Foundation, MacArthur River Mine, NT Emergency Services, Police force, Borroloola Arts Centre and more.

"The Learning on Country Program benefits our students by helping them engage with their own culture and identity building a stronger connection to land. It teaches all our students about culture, tradition and language as well as developing recognised competencies through VET training and Year 12 completion," said Stephanie.

The Learning on Country Program commenced in Borroloola in August 2018.



Bulgul Ranger Theresa Burrurr trying the bush medicine



L-R: Cordelle Pluto, Rowish Daylight and Leontae Raggett

# Timber Creek Rangers attend Full Council

Land Rights News sat down with the Timber Creek Rangers in Barunga, where they supported the joint NLC and CLC Full Council meeting.

"I'VE been with the Rangers for about four to five weeks," said Ngaliwurri woman, **Desley Jones**. "I really wanted to join because I want to take care of what my grandfather left us. I was really excited to come to Barunga and pick up new experiences here."

**Roslyn Merchant**, another new recruit who has lived in Timber Creek for most of her life, said she likes working as a Ranger.

"I've been working with the Timber Creek Rangers for a few months now and I like it. I get to go out bush, meet new people and learn skills."

**Monteanna Cattermole** has worked as a Timber Creek Ranger for over two years and is proud they have been able recruit new Rangers.

"It has been exciting getting a full team because we can now get pretty much everything done. We've been struggling getting people working with us (with attendance) so it's good to have a full crew. It's been fantastic with the ladies joining, I'm pretty happy with it!"

Timber Creek Ranger coordinator **Beatty Retchford** said it's very important that young women with strong culture take on these positions.

"Women have always had an important role to play when it comes to history, culture and taking it all forward," said Beatty

"That's why these ladies joined. They've actually joined because they have it (land and culture) deep in their heart, they want to look after their country and they want to move on to professions that look after their country. It was a pleasure leading this group at Barunga. Its been a new experience for everyone, and it made me very proud."



L-R: Miranda Farrer, Desley Jones, Beatty Retchford, Roselyn Merchant, Yvette Farrer, Monteanna Cattermole



Timber Creek Rangers at Barunga, June 2023

# Killing highlights illegal tourist access and camping

Tony Jack is angry. The NLC Councillor and Mayor of Roper Gulf Regional Council from Robinson River returned to his Garrawa Land Trust country after attending a funeral in late June to find a favoured Brahman bull dead. It was partially butchered, its throat cut and left to rot.

"WE had that old bull for a long time," Mr Jack, who has been Mayor since 2008, said.

"It was going on 12 years old and was really quiet. It would come up to the window of the car, real friendly. All the grandchildren are really upset."

The pure-bred Brahman was also a valuable asset having sired many of the herd. Originally purchased for \$3,500, today a replacement could cost up to \$10,000.

"It was such a senseless killing. It wasn't even done for food, so I really don't understand who would do this and why," Mr Jack said.

Recently, there has been an increase in trespassing problems on the land trust country where the bull was found, with tourists illegally accessing and camping at the east bank of the Robinson River Crossing, 105km south-east of Borroloola – that is Garawa Aboriginal Land, private property requiring a permit from the NLC to access.

This Dry season people are increasingly contravening the law and Tony Jack has had to move-on up to 15 vehicles in one day. On one occasion he heard illegal gunshots coming from the site on the land trust.

"We have worked really hard over the years to build up our community, our business and Garrawa country," Mr Jack said. "The Savannah Way cuts right through our land trust, and we welcome the visitors who come that way when they do the right thing and keep to public land.

"But more and more people



keep wanting to go further into our private property, and with this incident, it is very distressing and shows no respect. I don't know of any other pastoralist or private land owner that would put up with this," he said.

The NLC has erected additional

signage to ensure visitors to the Robinson River Crossing are aware of what areas they can and cannot legally access, but it is difficult monitoring online tourist forums and word-of-mouth recommendations that ignore legal restrictions.

For Tony Jack, the solution is straight forward. "I just want people to do the right thing and respect our country. At the moment there are some who just ignore the signs and drive around gates and fencing... and this mindless killing of our bull. We've just had enough."

# NLC takes aim at safari hunting

Commercial safari hunting operators in the Top End are being warned they need to comply with land rights legislation and section 19 (s19) commercial land use requirements or risk prosecution and reputational damage.

OPERATING Commercial Safari Hunting tours on Aboriginal Land without a s19 agreement and written access permits is a criminal offence and one that places clients at risk.

The NLC is campaigning to make sure local and international operators are aware of their obligations.

Hunting exhibitors advertising tours on Aboriginal Land are being asked to provide a copy of their s19 agreement or a written letter from the NLC confirming that they have Traditional Aboriginal Owner consent to book and conduct tours.

These requirements are being shared within popular hunting communities, ensuring potential clients can identify reputable operators.

Raising awareness of these requirements will:

- prevent hunting operators illegally booking clients
- protect paying hunters from unknowingly booking illegal tours and committing offences under federal and territory law
- avoid the possibility of void indemnity insurance claims, and
- protect the rights of Traditional Aboriginal Owners.

Work is also underway with the NT Firearms Licensing Unit to ensure correct licensing and strong firearm policy and processes are in place across the Top End.

NLC Chairman Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi said Traditional Owners (TOs) regularly support safari hunting on their country due to the damage that can be caused by feral buffalo, pigs, deer and other introduced wildlife.

"Visiting Aboriginal Land with the consent of TOs, through an approved s19 Safari Hunting operator, gives visitors the opportunity to experience hunting in this beautiful, remote part of Australia" he said.

"But hunting must be undertaken in the right way, by following the legal requirements and respecting our Country."

For information on permits, section 19 land use and commercial use agreements, scan the QR codes or visit:

- [nlc.org.au](http://nlc.org.au)
- [legislation.gov.au/Details/C2022C00364](http://legislation.gov.au/Details/C2022C00364)
- [legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/ABORIGINAL-LAND-ACT-1978](http://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/ABORIGINAL-LAND-ACT-1978)



Apply for Permits



s19 Land Use Agreements

**NO HUNTING, SHOOTING  
OR PIG DOGGING  
IN THIS AREA**

Aboriginal land is private property.

Unless you are an Aboriginal person with traditional rights to the area, it is illegal to:

- be on Aboriginal land without a permit
- conduct commercial activity, including hunting, without a licence under section 19 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* (Cth). **Traditional Owner verbal and/or written permission is not valid.**

Breaches are offences under NT and Commonwealth Law - you can be prosecuted.

**Please respect our land, our animals and most importantly the safety of our community.**

SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS ARE USED IN THIS AREA.

CONTACT NORTHERN LAND COUNCIL ON (08) 8920 5100 OR SCAN THE QR CODE

NORTHERN LAND COUNCIL

# Wardaman Rangers speak about the importance of wiyan (water)

In June representatives of the Wardaman Rangers attended the 2023 Freshwater Sciences Conference in Brisbane.

PRESENTING their work on water monitoring, the Rangers discussed the importance of water and country and how they are intrinsically connected.

The three-day conference was hosted by the Society for Freshwater Science, an organisation made up of freshwater science societies from North America, New Zealand and Australia, with the Brisbane conference being the first time the annual event has been held outside of North America.

The conference provided the Rangers a unique opportunity to build friendships and collaborate

with international delegates, identifying common challenges and sharing stories and science to advance their understanding of freshwater systems.

Through their presentation Wardaman Rangers Basil Murrimal, Jason Raymond and Tracey Rainger spoke about the importance of their freshwater country and the water monitoring work the rangers have been doing over the past three years called the Wardaman Wiyan (Water) Project.

The group presented a video demonstrating how the Rangers conduct their water monitoring on Wunggayajawin Country and showing why water monitoring is so important to Traditional Owners (TOs) in keeping traditions and culture alive for future generations.

"We shared our experiences with other Indigenous peoples from around the world and the freshwater science community. It was a great opportunity for us to attend and

talk about wiyan," said Wardaman Ranger and Wunggayajawin TO Tracey Rainger.

The Wardaman Rangers operate on the Wardaman Indigenous

Protected Area (IPA), which covers over 224,000 hectares of country within the Victoria River and Upper Daly catchments.



Wardaman Rangers Basil Murrimal, Jason Raymond and Tracey Rainger

## Aerial fire training for NLC Rangers

NLC Ranger groups did aerial incendiary (burning) training with SA Bushfire Solutions over May and June this year in preparation for planned burning and bushfire season.



Wagiman Rangers planning for aerial burns

THE Wagiman Rangers undertook their training in Katherine alongside the Jawoyn Rangers. Training for Garawa and Waanyi Garawa Rangers was held in Robinson River.

Rangers completed two separate stages of training. First, completing the necessary theory to plan appropriately their burns, and then riding in a helicopter and practising aerial burning using the Raindance system.

The NLC's Caring for Country Program works with local Aboriginal

communities and Traditional Owners (TOs) to develop Healthy Country Plans and to map what work needs to be done by Rangers.

Rangers conduct prescribed burning to light fires across their region at the right time of the year and under the right conditions. This helps to protect habitat and wildlife, including rare and endangered species, and reduces the risk of out-of-control bushfires in the Dry season.



Wagiman Rangers training with helicopters

# World Community Development Conference 2023

Across three days in June the Darwin Convention Centre hosted the World Community Development Conference 2023.

WITH a central theme of "from the edge", the conference examined the influence of Culture, Connection and Community in the field of community development.

Traditional Owners (TOs) and Native Title Holders, along with the NLC's Community Projects team played a significant role during the Conference by presenting six sessions across three days.

Highlights from the Conference included:

- Helen and Jane Gandangu, sisters and TOs for Galawarra on the eastern side of Galiwin'ku, captivated attendees with their presentation on local community development work. They shared achievements and valuable lessons learned through their community development journey. So affected by the presentation, at the conclusion of the

presentation attendees gave a standing ovation and danced with the presenters.

- Dray Smiler, who recently completed a work placement at the NLC with the Community Projects team, lent his voice-over talents to the new Community Projects video. Receiving its premiers at the Conference, the video complemented a keynote speech delivered by Dr Samuel Bush-Balansi.
- Thomas Cameron, a proud member of the Wattanee tribe from Littlewell, Western Australia, passionately shared his personal story and advocated for the preservation of land.

NLC's Montana Ahwon celebrated "a safe place for First Nations people to come together from around the world without feeling judged, to talk about where we come from, our differences and similarities, our passions and what we can do to better improve ourselves.

"We were able to draft up a map of the countries we came from including Australia and New Zealand, we pointed out where we all came from and our family connections. We had very inspiring and creative conversations," she said.



L-R: Joëlle Rabot-Honoré (ENL Foundation, Mauritius), Gillian Snowball (Littlewell), Garrutju Jane Gandangu, Helen Gandangu, Kath Boyne (ALPA), Sarah Bentley and May Bury



Dr Samuel Bush-Balansi speaking during the conference

## Welkam la Melabat Kantri! Welcome to our Country!

The South East Arnhem Land Indigenous Protected Area (SEAL IPA) Advisory Committee recently produced and published a cultural visitor information booklet for visitors.

CALLED 'Welkam la Melabat Kantru!', the book uses the kriol phrase meaning 'Welcome to our Country'.

The SEAL IPA Advisory Committee, in collaboration with the NLC's Community Projects team, funded the project through carbon credits.

The Yugul Mangi and Numbulwar

Numburindi Rangers in South East Arnhem Land regularly perform fire management work on the western edge of the Gulf of Carpentaria as part of the South East Arnhem Land Fire Abatement (SEALFA) project.

The fire management work generates carbon credits, which generate funds for the fire work in the following year. Additionally, the funds can support other Ranger activities as well as environmental, education, and community projects.

This booklet serves as a resource for individuals visiting South East Arnhem Land, providing detailed information about community, culture, language, history, wildlife, as well as the Indigenous Protected Area and cultural exclusion zones.

Representatives from each of the eight traditional tribal groups in the region, including Virginia Nundhirribala, Eva Nunggumajbarr,

Jana Daniels, Julie Roy, and Winston Thompson, form the SEAL IPA Advisory Committee.

The SEAL IPA group actively

funds various projects to foster community strength, growth, support for young people, and a sense of pride in community.



An information book for visitors to South East Arnhem Land, NT

# NLC Community Projects team is ready to help you make change in your community...

## Do a Community Project with the NLC team!!

DO you and other members of your Traditional Owner (TO) group want to make changes for your community's future?

The NLC's Community Projects team is a free service for Aboriginal groups who want to work together to do good things for their communities.

The NLC's Community Projects team helps groups to plan, manage and monitor community projects.

Twenty two groups in the Top End are already working with the Community Projects team – and so far they have undertaken more than 80 projects.

The Community Projects team will help you to plan projects following an 8-step journey. First, they will help your group to think about what is important and what you want to change for the future. This will help you to set clear goals for your projects, such as:

- supporting young people
- better health
- jobs
- education
- stronger culture, and
- connection to Country.

The Community Projects team will work with you to carefully plan a project, engage partners or contractor organisations, and monitor every step of the project.

Along the way, you will develop practical skills like planning, budgeting, problem-solving, project management and monitoring and evaluation.

Some groups have money they can use to do projects, some groups do not have money to use for projects. The Community Projects team can help ALL groups! You just need to demonstrate strong leadership and commitment.

Community Projects will also help you to apply for other funding and grants to do your projects. They can now also help groups apply for funds through the NLC's Matched Funding Program. The Matched Funding Program provides top-up funding for projects OR if you don't have any income, a contribution of \$50,000 to help you start doing projects.

The Community Projects team is ready to work with groups who want to do projects and make a change for their future. If you and your group are interested in working with the Community Projects team fill out an application form today!

To find out more information about how Community Projects can help your group, to learn about the Matched Funding Program and to fill out an application form, scan the QR code or you can:

**Visit:** [www.nlc.org.au/building-the-bush/planning-and-community-development](http://www.nlc.org.au/building-the-bush/planning-and-community-development)

**Call:** 0407 493 834

**Email:** cpd@nlc.org.au



## PROJECT EXAMPLES



**OVAL PROJECT**  
NGUKURR



**CULTURE CAMPS**  
SEAL IPA



**SIGNS**  
MALAK MALAK



**YOUTH WORKER POSITION**  
GALIWIN'KU



**LANGUAGE APP**  
MALAK MALAK



**PAINTING CREW**  
GAPUWIYAK



**SCHOOL PLAYGROUND**  
GALIWIN'KU



**OUTSTATION UPGRADE**  
MARRALUM



**MILINTJI CORPORATION**  
GAPUWIYAK

## Can Community Projects help my group to do projects to build a strong future?

Any Aboriginal group in the Top End can apply to work with the Community Projects team.

If your group receives some land use agreement income and your group decides to allocate at least \$100,000 per year to community projects, the Community Projects team will support you to plan and manage your community projects.

For groups that receive small amounts of income, or no income from land use agreements, the group can apply to work with the Community Projects team if you:

- are a recognised Aboriginal cultural group
- demonstrate strong leadership as Aboriginal people willing to drive

change (eg. self-motivated, take initiative, have clear ideas and goals)

- demonstrate strong community development aspirations (eg. vision, project ideas)
- are willing to undertake a participatory planning process and develop:
  - \* a group vision
  - \* governance skills
  - \* project management skills through delivery of community projects
- are willing to set aside future land-use agreement income to community projects
- identify a project planning group of at least 4 group members
- commit to consistent participation (4 days of meetings per year or as required with a majority of planning group members).



Generations of decision making in Ngukurr



Diminin TOs mapping out their bush holidays



Djarrany-Djarrany building their corporations capacity

# Getting organised to make the most of Country

To make the most of new social and economic opportunities in their region, Djarrany-Djarrany Native Title Holders have taken control and bought their corporation back to life.

THE group held two workshops this year to work through what type of corporate governance they need for their community.

The result has been to change the name of their corporation (now called Djarrany-Djarrany Aboriginal Corporation) and re-write their rule book to make sure it is set up to help them achieve their goals.

The group's workshops focused on understanding the needs of the community and working through the different options available under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) and *Corporations Act 2001*.

Through this process the group had to answer a number of questions:

- What are the roles and responsibilities of a director?
- Who should be able to become

a member?

- Can an organisation run both as a charity and still have a profit generating business? (Yes—it's possible!)
- Can concepts from traditional kinship and governance systems that recognise different types of connection to country be incorporated into an organisation's rule book? (Yes—it's possible!).

The work of the Djarrany-Djarrany Native Title Holders led to their corporation passing both a name change and a new rule book at a recent general meeting, with the changes approved by the corporation's members and accepted by the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC).

These workshops also helped the group develop a detailed plan for their organisation's future which involves establishing a:

- board of directors that represents the whole clan group and has responsibility for running social programs, overseeing business ventures and making future investment decisions, and
- special committee to make sure that all decision-making power for Marralam Darrigaru

Community Living Area remains with certain family groups of the clan who have cultural authority for the outstation.

After a lot of hard work, the group is ready to make the most of their new Djarrany-Djarrany Aboriginal Corporation, including finalising a business partnership agreement

with a local tour operator to embark on a tourism business venture.

**Workshops were co-facilitated by Peter Marin, a Director of MLCS Corporate who specialises in supporting Indigenous groups to do business planning and develop corporate governance, and the NLC's Community Projects team.**



Djarrany-Djarrany men planning for the future of their corporation



Maureen Simon, Janelle Ninganmara and Sophia Simon working through the corporations structure



Djarrany-Djarrany excited the Corporations future as the Board of Directors now represents the whole clan group

# New plain English health dictionary launched!

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS) launched their Plain English Health Dictionary in June.

THE dictionary is a collaboration between AIS staff, interpreters and health professionals and is a much needed resource for AIS interpreters working in the Northern Territory health sector.

The dictionary translates

concepts and terms from medical English into plain English and will help to better communicate health information to Aboriginal Territorians when they access health services.

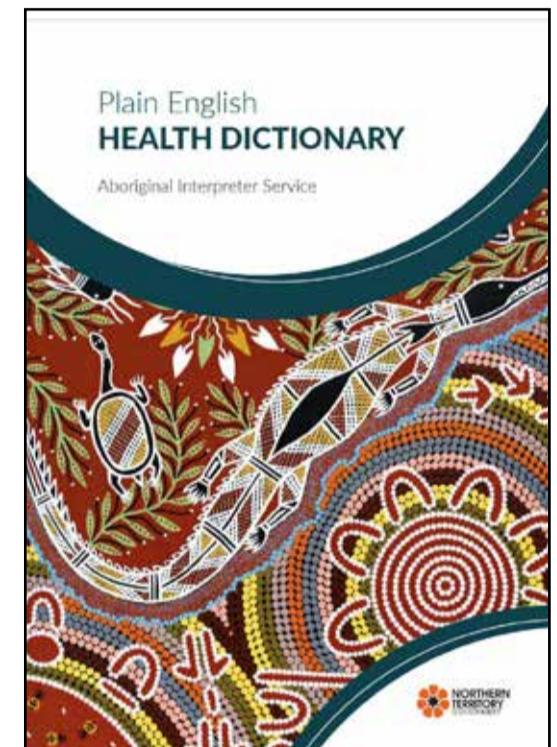
The content was selected and

edited by local health professionals in consultation with AIS interpreters.

**You can get your free copy at nt.gov.au (search Plain English Health Dictionary).**



The Northern Territory Primary Health Network, NT Health, Menzies School of Health Research and the Aboriginal Interpreter Service were all involved in the project.



# New IPA for Maringa country

Congratulations to Traditional Owners, the Crocodile Islands Rangers and MOPRA on the declaration of Maringa country as an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), taking in 20 islands and 800,000 hectares of land and sea country.

THE federal Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek MP, welcomed the new IPA which she said provides vital nesting beaches for turtles and is home to over 20,000 migratory waterbirds every year.

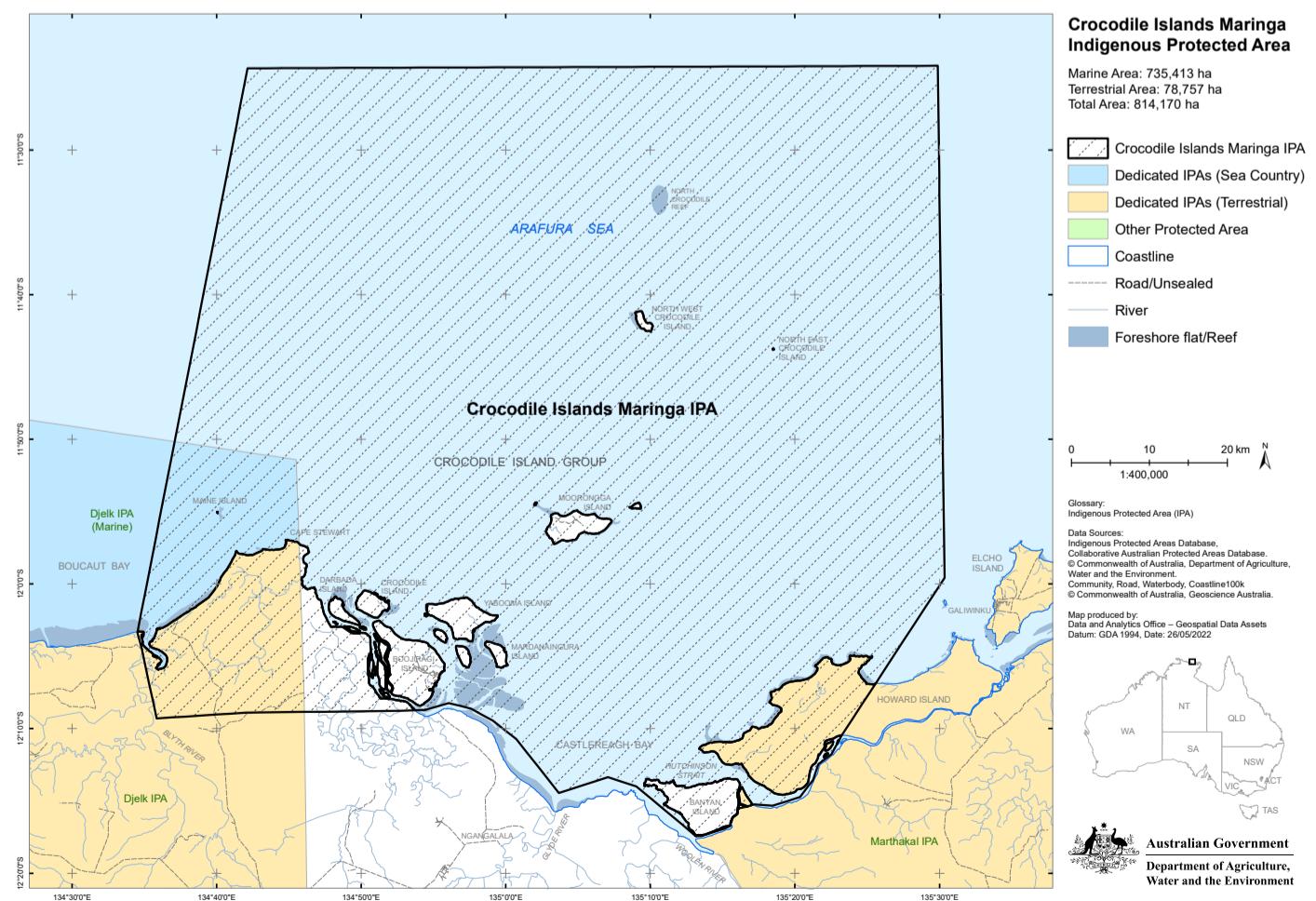
"First Nations peoples have been successfully looking after land for 65,000 years. That's why Labor has committed to establish ten new Indigenous Protected Areas and double the number of Indigenous Rangers by 2030."

Minister Plibersek said.

TO Leonard Bowaynu told the ABC the IPA supports rangers to work on country and to see young

ones learn from elders. "I kept thinking of my dream about how to keep our sacred sites protected... If you are a Traditional Owner, you

have to keep the land and sea strong and healthy," he told the national broadcaster.



# NLC acts to restore country after mining



The tailings dam at Ranger uranium mine

The cultural impact, pollution and environmental damage caused by mining activity and abandoned mine sites on Aboriginal land is an on-going challenge that the NLC is looking to tackle in collaboration with Traditional Owners (TOs) and community interests, and with increased enthusiasm from big mining companies.

ABORIGINAL lands and waterways, and cultural activity, have been threatened by mining operations on country ever since gold-miners rushed to Pine Creek in 1872.

The NLC's new Closing, Abandoned and Legacy Mines Program (CALM) aims to ensure mining companies are provided the perspectives of land owners when closing down mines, by building on the vast knowledge of TOs and the NLC's technical expertise.

"Ideally, the landscape and the sites need to be protected before the mine even starts, through consultation with TOs, but that

hasn't always happened," said Chris Brady, Senior Project Officer from the NLC's Resources and Energy team.

"Some of the big mine companies have recognized the need to respect the TOs and want to minimise risks, so they engage with them in the planning phase."

"An important thing for Aboriginal people during mine closure is to reconnect with the sites and the knowledge of that place, and to show the young people the importance of that area."

While legislation like the new *Environment Protection Act 2019* may help improve mining rehabilitation standards in the NT, the damage to country and the historical exclusion of Aboriginal voices from the process is only just starting to be redressed.

Prominent mines in the Top End currently working through closure include the Ranger uranium mine and the bauxite operation at Gove. There is an increased urgency for planning and action to minimise future environmental and cultural damage, and to deliver rehabilitation of land. This can only be done with the contribution of TOs.

Aboriginal land owners are culturally responsible to care for Country and to pass on the knowledge relating to it. An increased involvement is needed to improve outcomes during mine closures and in the remediation of abandoned mines.



Habitat near Redbank copper mine

## The mining industry has a lot of catching up to do ...

More than forty years after the Finniss River Land Claim was won by the Kungarakan and Warai TOs, the Rum Jungle mine site and its waterways, 100 kilometres south of Darwin, remain contaminated with acid and metals that have leached into the biosphere.

Rum Jungle was a uranium and copper mine that operated from 1954 to 1971 and provided fuel for the US and British nuclear programs. It destroyed sacred sites and ruined a lot of country, yet the mine was given the go-ahead by the Australian Government without any consultation.

The Commonwealth spent \$18 million on rehabilitation at Rum Jungle mine site in the 1980s, but the covers over acid forming material have washed away.

Aboriginal land and water was also damaged at the Redbank copper mine in the Gulf country because of inadequate environmental assessments, the miner's failure to comply with regulatory approvals, and an inability to manage the impacts of mining.

Pollution from the mine can still be detected 40 kilometres downstream and the TOs are still waiting for rehabilitation work to begin.

# Mirarr Cultural Closure Criteria – Ranger uranium mine

The establishment of Cultural Closure Criteria and the prominent role of Mirarr in the mine closure process at Ranger uranium mine is a progressive example of collaboration that

THE NLC and Aboriginal land owners have been closely engaged in the closure process at Ranger, where agreed Cultural Closure Criteria have been put in place.

These benchmarks are based on

extensive consultation with Mirarr Traditional Owners (TOs) and have been approved by the regulator through the Ranger mine closure plan.

The inclusion of the criteria,

guided by Aboriginal people, is a first for Australia and sets a benchmark for mine closures in the future.

The NLC facilitated the formation of the Ranger mine's Cultural Reconnection Steering Committee to design and implement the Cultural Closure Criteria and it has adopted the local name of Karriyawoh-bolk-mang, meaning 'we are getting the country again'.

The committee is made up of TOs and other Bininj and advisers, NLC

staff, linguist Dr Murray Garde OAM, and rehabilitation expert and Bininj man, Peter Christophersen.

As well as senior land owners, it includes young people who will participate in the long-term monitoring of the site and who will promote the inter-generational transfer of knowledge to further protect country and waterways.



Mirarr Traditional Owner Stewart Gangale rehabilitating land



Nida Mangarnbarr and Peter Christophersen at Ranger Mine Nursery

# Upgraded sewerage services for Weemol

By Chantal Bramley, Stakeholder Engagement Project Manager, Power and Water Corporation

**Power and Water Corporation is now providing sewerage services to the community of Weemol through its non-profit arm Indigenous Essential Services (IES) after many years of strong campaigning from the local community.**

IN late 2022 contractors Fred NT upgraded the sewerage services in Weemol by linking them to the pre-existing system in Bulman.

IES, NLC and Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) worked together to find a solution for the old sewerage system, which ran through culturally significant land.

This essential project may not have happened were it not for the passion and persistence of community leader John Dalywater.

Mr Dalywater lives and works in Weemol. In 1993, Mr Dalywater studied Environmental Health at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education to become one of the first Environmental Health field workers in the Northern Territory.

Good friend and mentor Ken O'Brien supported Mr Dalywaters training in the Effluent Disposal Unit, and it was because of this training and field experience that Mr Dalywater became concerned about the septic systems used throughout his community.

The systems were poorly designed and installed on the unforgiving black soil of the region. Absorption drains were ineffective in that landscape and were holding effluent. Overcrowded housing and the high water table in the community exacerbated the issues.

Mr Dalywater and his family felt these impacts, as he contracted Hepatitis B in the course of his work

maintaining the drain-field area.

Not accepting these substandard conditions, Mr Dalywaters became a vocal leader on behalf of community members, liaising with government departments over the past three

decades resulting in an agreement between the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development (DLGHCD) and IES to fund, design and construct sewerage services for Weemol.



L-R: Kruti Patel, Engineer WGA; Andre Tayler, Director Fred NT; Chantal Bramley, Stakeholder Engagement PWC; John Dalywater Arnhem Weemol Community Leader; Teng Yik, Program Manager PWC

## NTG to improve remote access

**Access to the remote Aboriginal communities of Numbulwar and Ngukurr is set to be improved after the Northern Territory government announced funding for a crucial transit way to the Big Rivers and East Arnhem Regions.**

A \$20 million budget allocation will be used to upgrade Numbulwar Road's Phelp River crossing, to improve safety and access for both locals and visitors.

Currently, Numbulwar Road is impassable for 44 days on average per year due to flooding.

The project will include the construction of flood mitigation measures including concrete floodways, culverts and bridges around the Phelp River crossing, improving

accessibility for tourists and the delivery of essential services to the region.

The Hon Selena Uibo, MLA for Arnhem Selena Uibo said the improvements to road infrastructure will benefit those who live in and visit her electorate.

"This project is something I have

worked for since being elected. It is great news for people who live in the East Arnhem region who have been advocating for some time for this type of infrastructure," Ms Uibo said.

"Better road access will cut the costs of getting goods and services in communities, which will benefit locals in Numbulwar and Ngukurr."

"We also expect to see an increase in economic opportunities as a result of this project, such as tourism opportunities and Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal Business Enterprise outcomes through the construction and maintenance of the road."



Phelp River crossing

# NLC wins change to Petroleum Act

The NT Government has been forced to change amendments to its 1984 Petroleum Act relating to the use of appraisal gas, following urgent and robust dialogue with the NLC and the three other NT land councils.

APPRAISAL gas is released following successful drilling during the exploration stage of onshore

gas development, and prior to the December 2022 amendments, this gas belonged to the Crown until the production phase commenced.

The amendments changed the law to make appraisal gas the property of the exploration company, however, this process did not include consent of Traditional Owner (TO) and Native Title Holders, and omitted the requirements needed for a petroleum production licence.

At the time, the Chair Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi said the NLC had not been notified or asked to input into the rushed legislation and the NT

Government should be "slammed for selling out Territorians and Traditional Owners."

Subsequent lobbying, including a June 2023 joint NLC and CLC submission to the NT Government on its Draft Application Guideline for Recovery of Petroleum on an Appraisal Basis, have resulted in the latest changes to the Petroleum Act that now requires the consent of TOs and Native Title Holders to tap and sell appraisal gas.

"The NT Government's rethink on its appraisal gas amendments to the Petroleum Act to incorporate the rights of Traditional Owners

and Native Title Holders comes as a relief," NLC CEO Joe Martin-Jard said. "But, a lot of effort and concern could have been avoided if the NT Government had acknowledged the legitimate rights of Aboriginal Territorians and spoken to land councils in the first instance.

"Our members want us to work on productive relationships with government, but this has to be built on respect – respect for land holders and respect for the hard-fought legal obligations under the NT Land Rights Act and Native Title Act. It benefits everyone to do so."

# Danila Dilba, bigger and better

Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS), Darwin's only Aboriginal community-controlled health provider, continues to expand in 2023 with plans for a new clinic underway and the introduction of additional aged care services.

THE new Seniors Home Care Support Service helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged over 50 years and living in the Darwin region to stay healthy and well. It includes access to transport to and from appointments, assistance with shopping, social outings, and help to connect with other aged care services.

"Many families in Darwin are clients of Danila Dilba clinics throughout their entire lives, so it makes sense to extend this support to in-reach services within a client's home," said DDHS CEO Rob McPhee.

DDHS has also signed an \$11.6 million contract with the Commonwealth Government to construct a new Palmerston clinic to meet the growing needs of the region and provide an opportunity to

build a community-friendly space to accommodate other health and wellbeing activities.

"The current Palmerston clinic is our busiest site and it continues to grow quickly," Mr McPhee said. "The next stage is to secure funding to purchase land to build the new clinic. Our executive team is meeting with

potential funders and partners to discuss options to progress this exciting project."

"Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to remind everyone

about annual health checks" said Mr McPhee.

"Remember to call Danila Dilba on 8942 5400 to book your free Health Check."

**"An annual health check is so important for our mob ... It's so much easier to prevent a chronic disease if we can catch it early."**

## Have you had your Health Check?

You don't need to be sick to get a health check!

Danila Dilba provides free health checks to clients, from eight-weeks old right through to seniors.

You'll also get a free Deadly Choices shirt at each annual check-up, just for turning up!

Getting the right advice early can prevent a chronic disease developing down the track!



**Call Danila Dilba on 8942 5400 to book your Health Check**

# Kings Birthday Honours List 2023

On June 12 the King's Birthday Honours List was announced with several Territorians recognised for their lifetime of hard work and dedication to the NT and Territorians. They include...

**Dr Shellie Morris AO**, for distinguished service to the performing arts, to the Indigenous community, and to not-for-profit organisations.

**Helen Fejo-Frith AM**, for significant service to the Indigenous community of the NT.

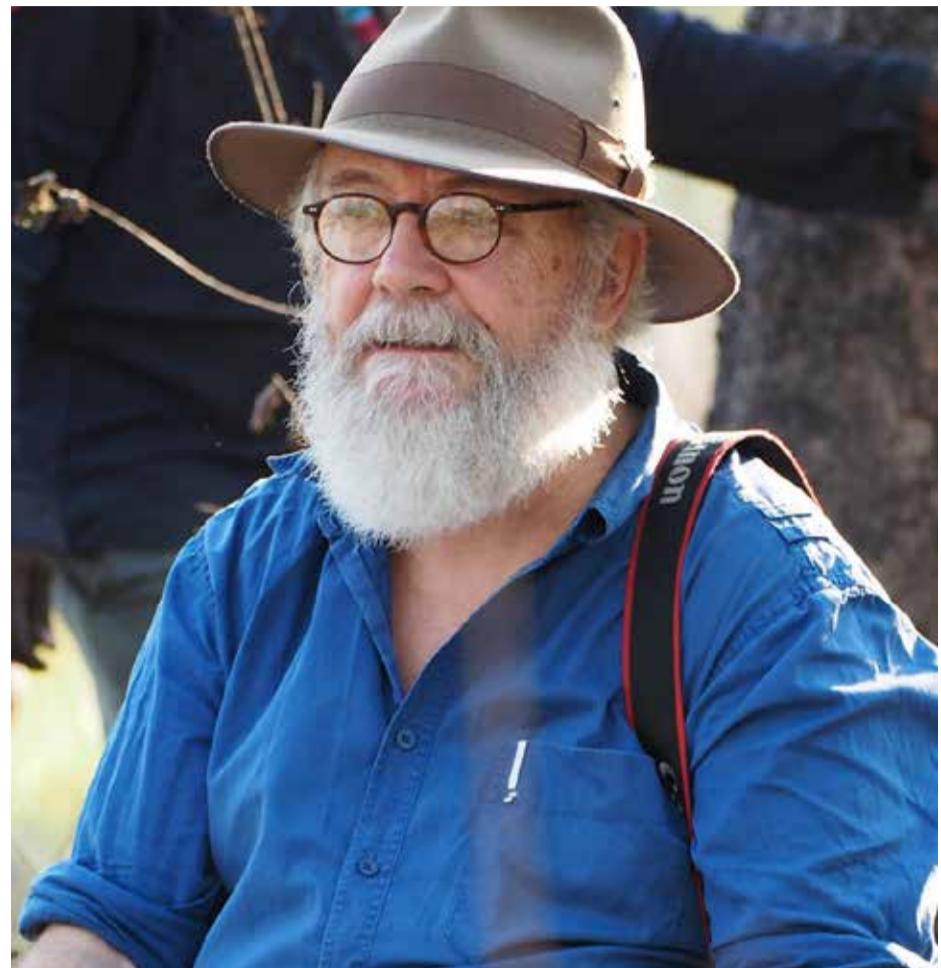
**Kaye Olwyn Thurlow AM**, for significant service to the Indigenous community of East Arnhem Land.

**Cecilia Alfonso OAM**, for service to the arts through administrative roles.

**Gloria Morales OAM**, for service to the arts through administrative roles.

Also honoured was **Peter Cooke AM**, for significant service to the Indigenous community of the NT. Cooke is a former long-time NLC employee and friend, and strong advocate for Aboriginal Territorians and Country.

In announcing the Honours and Awards, Governor-General of the David Hurley said "learning about the wide-ranging service of recipients, which spans almost every field of endeavour imaginable, is uplifting and makes me enormously optimistic for our country. Collectively they speak to who we are now and who we can be in the future."



Former long-time NLC employee Peter 'Cookie' Cooke AM



## Northern Territory Aboriginal Tourism Strategy 2020-2030

ANNUAL REPORT CARD ENDING JUNE 2022

>>><<<

The Northern Territory Aboriginal Tourism Strategy 2020 – 2030 outlines key initiatives to achieve a sustainable Aboriginal tourism sector and build on the Territory's strengths and cultural assets.

Grouped under five strategic pillars, the strategy aims to lead the development of the sector in partnership with Aboriginal people and operators, to deliver cultural and economic benefits for Aboriginal people.

To find out more about the NT Aboriginal Tourism Strategy report card contact:  
08 8999 7420.

[www.tourismnt.com.au](http://www.tourismnt.com.au)



### Living cultures

Respectfully sharing our Aboriginal cultures



### Living communities

Strengthening knowledge and understanding in Aboriginal people and across networks



### Living lives

Nurturing skills and developing support tools to create better business, job and industry success



### Living landscapes

Providing better access and services to destinations



### Living interactions

Improving communication, engagement and monitoring our connections with visitors and the industry

# NAIDOC Week 2023 “For Our Elders”

This years NAIDOC theme “For Our Elders” called attention to our old people and the roles they play as not only our cultural knowledge holders, but as our trailblazers, nurturers, advocates, teachers, survivors and leaders.

The theme resonated strongly in the Northern Territory with significant attendance at events in Alice Springs, Darwin and in-between. The Darwin NAIDOC March saw nearly 8000 people walking through the streets of Darwin City in support of our elders.

NLC Chair Dr Bush-Blanasi commented on the importance of this year's theme.

“As Traditional Owners and representatives for our Country, we carry on the wisdom, culture

and strength of our Elders and ancestors.

“They inspired our 2023 Barunga Voice Declaration which asks all Australians to support us in the Referendum and vote YES. Elders guide our continuing efforts to be recognised as equals in our own country.

“In NAIDOC Week we celebrate all of our Elders, past and present. They are the soul of our families and it is a time to thank and honour them for giving us the love, strength

and determination to find our way and better our lives and the future of this Nation,” Dr Bush-Blanasi said.

The 2023 NAIDOC poster was created by Bobbi Lockyer a Ngarluma, Kariyarra, Nyulnyul and Yawuru artist from Kariyarra Country in Port Hedland.

National NAIDOC Week is held across Australia in the first week of July to celebrate and recognise the history and culture of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Kenbi Dancers



Stolen Generation advocate Aunty Eileen Cummings and Larrakia Elder Pauline Baban



NLC staff join the march



NLC's Katherine Office celebrating NAIDOC



Saltwater Band



Nearly 8,000 people marched through the streets of Darwin City

# Barunga Festival 2023

BARUNGA Festival 2023 was another fantastic celebration of culture, music, art, sports and community.

Thousands of visitors from nearby communities and across Australia travelled to the community of Barunga to take in the sights and culture of the popular 3-day Festival.

This year Barunga celebrated 35 years of the historic Barunga Statement when, in 1988, former NLC Chair Yunupingu handed the Barunga Statement to Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

NLC Chair Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi spoke at the opening of the festival, thanking residents for their hospitality and asking the audience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to support the Voice to Parliament.

"All we are asking of you, us Indigenous people, is for you to support us. Now is the time that we all get together." Dr Bush-Blanasi said.

Barunga Festival is the oldest running Aboriginal community festival. It will return in 2024 during the Kings Birthday long weekend.



## Barunga Sports Wrap Up

AFLNT, Katherine Softball, Rugby NT, the visiting US Marines and volunteers from East Arnhem coordinated this years sporting carnivals and activations.

### AFL

The local football oval was transformed into the Barunga TIO Stadium much to the delight of the community.

The Big Rivers Football League hosted Round 6 of the Senior Men's and Senior Women's competition at Barunga Oval.

Arnhem Crows won both the men's and women's Festival footy competition.

### Basketball

A total of 14 teams registered to play in this year's basketball tournament, travelling from across the Territory to compete. Gapuwiyak won both the men's and women's competitions.

### Softball

Katherine Softball hosted and coordinated a women's competition over two-days. This was the first year that the Plenty Highway team had travelled from Alice Springs to compete at Barunga Festival.

Green River Saints won the competition with Plenty Highway as runners up.

## Barunga School to sing at Opera House!

**Students of Barunga School will soon be travelling to Sydney to sing at the Sydney Opera House in to celebrate the publication of their new book Shordi Krik.**

SHORDI Krik tells the story of school students who go on a trip to their local creek "where life is sweet" to play, swim and enjoy their lives in their community of Barunga.

The development of book, written in English and Kriol, was supported through workshops run by Australian actor and performer Justine Clarke, an Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF) Lifetime Ambassador.

Similarly, illustrations were created by students inspired by digital illustrating workshops produced by Alison Lester AM, also a Lifetime Ambassador for ILF.

"The kids in Barunga are talented songwriters and illustrators, and have developed the words and illustrations to create this book, Shordi Krik, from their own experiences," Justine said. "It has been an absolute pleasure to support these kids over the last seven years to help develop their

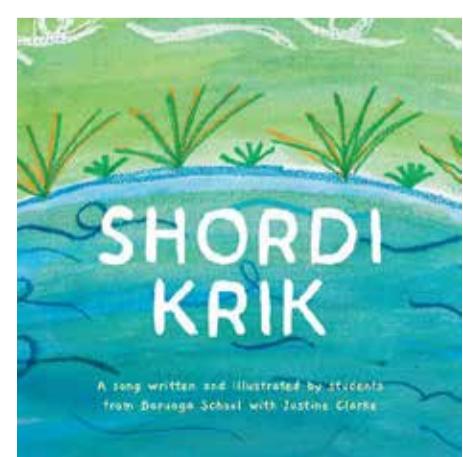
story into a song and now into a beautiful published book."

In support of the book, the Barunga students turned the story of Shordi Krik into a song. Performed at this year's Barunga Festival, and led by Justine Clarke, students sang in front of their families, community and festival attendees.

The Barunga students will also be singing their song at the Sydney Opera House on 6 September as part of a livestreamed performance for Indigenous Literacy Day.

Shordi Krik is available for purchase through the Indigenous Literacy Foundation website and in all good book stores. You can listen to the song "Shordi Krik" on digital streaming platforms.

For more information about Indigenous Literacy Day visit: [indigenoustliteracyfoundation.org.au/ilfd](http://indigenoustliteracyfoundation.org.au/ilfd)





Fierce basketball competition



Green River Saints softball team



Arnhem Crows play Ngukurr Bulldogs



Footballers celebrating



Basket weaving demonstration



Crowds gather for the opening of Barunga Festival 2023

# Enrol to vote in elections and referendums

Who needs to enrol

**All Australian citizens aged 18 and over.**

Remember to update your details if you have changed your name or address. If you are already enrolled to vote in elections, you don't need to enrol again for referendums.

## How to enrol

**Step 1** Have one of these forms of identity:



Driver's  
Licence



Medicare  
card



Australian  
passport



Australian  
Citizenship  
certificate



Someone enrolled  
who knows who  
you are

**Step 2** Visit [aec.gov.au](http://aec.gov.au) to enrol or update your details online, or call **13 23 26** to request a paper enrolment form.

**Enrol today** to have your say



# Yirrmal to perform at Darwin Festival



Yirrmal - Photographed by Lachlan Douglas

The NLC is proud to sponsor Yolŋu artist Yirrmal to perform at the 2023 Darwin Festival on the Festival's Sunset Stage on Sunday 13 August at 7pm.

The Rirratjingu vocalist, known in part for his work with Baker Boy, is a rising star whose "voice will break your heart and his spirit will put it back together."

**DARWIN FESTIVAL**  
10-27 AUGUST 2023

**More information:** [darwinfestival.org.au/events/yirrmal/](http://darwinfestival.org.au/events/yirrmal/)

## Art fair brings culture to new audiences

The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair is a spectacular showcase of First Nations' art, sculpture, fabric, fibre and clothing, bringing together art centres from across the country.

Held at the Darwin Convention Centre from 11-13 August, it's a highlight of the opening week of the Darwin Festival and incorporates a public program and two lead events: Country to Couture on Tues 8 Aug, and the National Indigenous Fashion Awards Wed 9 August.

**More information:** [daaf.com.au](http://daaf.com.au)



## Awards celebrate 40 years

In 2023 the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award (NATSIAAs) celebrate 40 years. Each state and territory is represented in this year's 63 finalists, including 31 entries from the NT. Finalists are vying for a total of \$190,000 in prize money across seven award categories.

Winners will be announced at a ceremony at the Museum and Art Gallery of the NT on Friday 11 August. The exhibition officially opens to the public on Saturday 12 August 2023.



**More information:** [magnt.net.au/natsiaa](http://magnt.net.au/natsiaa)

## September National Conference in Darwin

SNAICC – Australia's peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children – holds its 10th national conference on Larrakia land in Darwin, 5-7 September 2023.

The NLC is proud to be a sponsor of Voices at the Top – Our Children, Our Rights, Our Way.

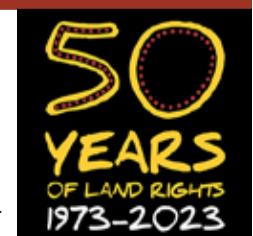


**More information:** [snaicc.org.au/conference](http://snaicc.org.au/conference)

## 50 years of land rights

Join the Northern Land Council as we celebrate 50 years since the first meeting of our first Council and the formation of the NLC.

In September the NLC will host a celebration on the lawns in front of Parliament House including bunggul and rock bands from the Top End.



**More information coming soon.**

50  
YEARS  
OF LAND RIGHTS

CELEBRATE WITH US  
THIS SEPTEMBER

1973-2023