



MEDIA RELEASE

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NT election must be a watershed for protection of remote drinking supply

The four Northern Territory land councils condemn the unacceptable lack of protection for safe and adequate drinking water in the NT.

Meeting in Darwin with NT Chief Minister Michael Gunner and opposition party leaders, the land councils called for urgent legislation to ensure that all Territorians have access to safe drinking water.

The land councils want all parties to commit to enacting a Safe Drinking Water Act that provides regulatory protection and accountability for the safe and adequate water for all.

Communities throughout the NT – from the north to the south - are experiencing poor water quality and water stresses, for example Kintore, Yuendumu, Willowra, Yuelamu, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Willora, Wutunugurra, Alekarange, Utopia, Alpurrurulam, Warruwi, Bulla, Numbulwar, Ngukurr, Milingimbi, Wurrumiyanga and Laramba.

Central Land Council chief executive Joe Martin-Jard said residents of the Laramba community, three hours northwest of Alice Springs, are drinking water that contains three times the level of uranium than is recommended as safe by the World Health Organisation.

“The lack of legislative protection out bush is discriminatory and constitutes negligence by the Northern Territory Government,” he said.

“That’s why we want whoever forms the next NT government to bring in legally enforceable minimum standards for drinking water quality and security.”

“All Territorians, not just those living in major towns, have a right to safe and adequate drinking water,” Northern Land Council Chairman Samuel Bush-Blanasi said.

“Bush voters deserve to know how the parties are planning to ensure they can enjoy this right.”

The land councils say existing water legislation must also be amended to prioritise future drinking water reserves over all other uses.

“These legislative changes must be supported by an overarching water security strategy to protect our most precious resource,” Tiwi Land Council chief executive Andrew Tipungwuti said.

“Any party vying for the bush vote must commit to significantly increasing spending on repair, replacement and maintenance of ageing remote water infrastructure and installation of proven technological solutions to better use non-potable water.”

Anindilyakwa Land Council chair Tony Wurramarrba added that all funding decisions about water infrastructure and services must be transparent, and involve the land councils.

“Too many of our communities are running out of water or are forced to drink polluted water. We need to be involved in deciding on water infrastructure and services on Aboriginal land,” he said.

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