



NT land councils bring Voice Declaration to the people's house

The chairs of the four Northern Territory Aboriginal land councils will visit Parliament House in Canberra tomorrow to deliver the 2023 Barunga Declaration urging Australians to support a Voice to Parliament.

The chairs and members of the land councils are elected representatives of tens of thousands of traditional owners and Aboriginal residents of remote communities, homelands, town camps and towns across the NT.

The four chairs will present the Barunga Declaration to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

On 9 June, members of the Northern, Central, Tiwi and Anindilyakwa land councils signed the Declaration at Barunga on the anniversary of the 1988 Barunga Statement that was presented to then Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

Thirty-five years ago the Central and Northern land council chairs Wenten Rubuntja and Yunupingu addressed the leader of the Federal Government and called for Aboriginal recognition and rights.

Today, the 2023 Barunga Declaration speaks directly to the people of Australia and 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".

Northern Land Council chair, Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi, said: "This Declaration comes from our people. It is the voice from the bush calling on all Australians to recognise us, support us, and help us make the changes so urgently needed for a better future, together."

Tiwi Land Council chair, Gibson Farmer Illortaminni, said: "Through the establishment of a Voice to Parliament, we, the Tiwi people, want to be at the table when decisions are made that affect our land, culture, and future. We urge all Australians to join us to ensure our voices are heard and respected when important decisions are being made that affect us".

"The Barunga Declaration deserves to hang alongside the Barunga Statement on the walls of the people's house for all times and make future generations of Australians proud," Central Land Council chair Matthew Palmer said.

Anindilyakwa Land Council chair, Tony Wurramarrba, said: "We want our voices to always be heard in the parliament and by the government before decisions are made about us. Business as usual has failed us. We are here to ask all Australians to help us open the door to a better way of working together and vote yes in the referendum."

21 June 2023

The declaration is at <https://www.clc.org.au/2023-barunga-voice-declaration-2/> and a short video of grass-roots land council members signing it at Barunga is at <https://vimeo.com/837800449/0f047b2e2f>