



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Northern Land Council – Don't make decisions about us without us

11 November 2021

The Northern Land Council supports the call by the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory (AMSANT) that a safe reopening of the Northern Territory must be based on a number of key principles and actions.

As the peak body for Aboriginal primary health service providers, AMSANT is best placed to provide advice about remote area health sector preparedness and health resourcing needs and strategies to avoid future chaos around COVID-19 transmission in remote overcrowded communities.

Prior to the recent COVID-19 transmission events in Darwin and Katherine, the NLC Chairman Samuel Bush-Blanasi emphasised that: “We need higher vaccination rates in the NT because 80% ... is too low to protect Aboriginal people in remote communities. We need minimum of 90%.”

Mr Bush-Blanasi stressed the need to use the best information available, and based on the recent Doherty Institute updated data modelling, the NLC supports AMSANT's call for 90% coverage for Aboriginal people over the age of 16 years before NT borders open. Once a safe vaccine is approved for children from 5 years of age, the NLC would support AMSANT's call for a revised target of 80%.

Without an enhanced and targeted remote vaccination program, the NLC has concerns about the requirements, complexity and workability of rapid antigen testing and mask wearing in communities with a vaccination rate below 70%.

The NLC applauds Danila Dilba's recent Vax-A-Thon initiative in Palmerston and suggests that similar initiatives could occur in communities and remote homelands following appropriate consultation.

Mr Bush-Blanasi said: “If we don't have reliable vaccination data outside of Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs, then we won't know where to target our multilingual vaccination promotional efforts. Remember our Aboriginal land and waters border Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia and major towns across the NT too.

“This is about our lives, our people and our country. Governments have to think beyond the big cities when making important decisions about our mob out bush – don't make decisions about us without us.”