

NLC to NT government: ‘Stop blaming Aboriginal people for your failures’

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The Northern Land Council says Aboriginal Territorians have been betrayed by the shock announcement today that the government won’t proceed with proposed amendments to the *Pastoral Land Act*. The amendments would have recognised the rights and interests of Traditional Owners when lease holders want to undertake large-scale non-pastoral use of their pastoral leases.

NLC Chief Executive Officer Marion Scrymgour today called on the government to stop making excuses for its failure to follow through on its commitments to Aboriginal Territorians.

The NLC has worked long and hard to land at a position that – to use the government’s own words – strikes a ‘fair balance’ between the rights and interests of native title holders and those of pastoral lease holders.

Ms Scrymgour noted: “There are issues of importance that the land councils and our constituents can work on with the Cattlemen’s Association, for instance the reintroduction of the NT Police Stock Squad, but on other matters we’ve agreed to disagree.

“The fact that we can’t agree with the Cattlemen’s Association about everything should not be used by the government as an excuse to walk away from this critical issue.

“The government can’t claim that there’s uncertainty on behalf of native title holders as justification for delaying this bill. There is no uncertainty with native title holders, the only uncertainty here lies with the Cattlemen’s Association.

“This is the second slap in the face for native title holders on pastoral land following their exclusion from the government’s Strategic Water Reserves Policy.

“It is particularly disingenuous of the government to refer to the opportunities for Aboriginal economic development presented by this policy when those opportunities are denied to the vast majority of native title holders.

“The government should stop blaming Aboriginal people, stop focusing on the next election and start doing what is right.”

ENDS

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