



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Monday 4 September 2023

Northern Land Council call for harsher penalties around illegal land clearing

Quotes attributable to Northern Land Council's Chair, Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi:

The findings of the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security into illegal land clearing at Tarwoo Station represent a clear disregard by the Northern Territory Government in punishing criminal activity on land involving Aboriginal interests.

The fine of \$7,536 for illegally clearing land is outrageously low. A fine of this size will not deter developers from continuing this practise. If anything, it demonstrates that for a small fee you can clear land wherever and whenever you want.

The NT Government must start building and enforcing a regulatory environment which serves the interests of all Territorians.

The current punishments are ineffective, as we see through continuing instances of illegal land clearing across the Top End. Something needs to change. Regulations need to be stricter, investigations need to be more transparent and penalties must be harsher.

In 2023 the Northern Land Council nominated Aboriginal representatives to take up positions on the Pastoral Land Board. These nominations were rejected. Considering the shared interests and rights to land in the Territory from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, a balanced representation within this statutory authority could lead to more mutually beneficial decision making.

Aboriginal Territorians have legal rights to Country subject to pastoral leases. They need to be given an opportunity to protect sacred sites before land clearing can happen.

The Northern Land Council is not opposed to developing land. But Native Title Holders rights must be respected in that process.

The Northern Land Council is celebrating 50 years since the meeting of Traditional Owners who constituted the NLC's inaugural Full Council on 25-26 September 1973