



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

NLC calls for a fair go for Aboriginal Territorians at the 2022 election: ‘Stop discriminating against us because of where we live!’

8 April 2022

This week the Northern Land Council released the latest short film in its months-long campaign to encourage Aboriginal Territorians to enrol to vote and to raise awareness about the failure by the Australian Electoral Commission (the AEC) to ensure people living in remote Aboriginal communities and homelands get on the electoral roll.

The latest film in NLC-TV’s “*Sign Up to Stand Up*” campaign features renowned performer Kamahi Djordon-King and Territory icon Constantina Bush and sends a strong message to the Australian Electoral Commission (the AEC) that it should ‘*Stop discriminating against Aboriginal people in the NT because of where we live!*’.

The NLC has a number of serious concerns on behalf of more than 50,000 Aboriginal Territorians that live in the NLC area about how ineffective the AEC has been at getting remote Territorians on the electoral roll. In the NT the same roll, prepared by the AEC, is used for NT and Federal elections.

Of particular concern is the AEC refusal to implement a policy in remote NT communities – called direct or automatic enrolment – it uses everywhere else in Australia to automatically enrol voters using datasets like Centrelink, the Australian Tax Office and State and Territory motor vehicle registries. This means that far fewer people are enrolled out bush in the NT than should be.

In late 2021 the NT Electoral Commission issued a damning report that found almost one in three young Territorians weren’t enrolled to vote and that across all ages more than 24,000 Territorians should have been enrolled but weren’t. Other research indicates the real number could be much higher – maybe as many as 40,000 across the NT. Even the AEC says enrolment rates in the NT are ‘unacceptable’.

The Northern Land Council has consistently worked for ‘a fair go’ for Aboriginal voters in the NT in the lead up to the 2022 election.

In early 2021 two senior men from Arnhem Land lodged a complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission about the AEC’s failure to provide proper enrolment services to Aboriginal Territorians. That complaint is still before the Commission.

Speaking of that complaint NLC Chair Samuel Bush-Blanasi said: “All our mob in the NLC area know that the AEC has been failing them for years. At the 2018 Federal election about half of the NT’s Aboriginal population wasn’t enrolled to vote. This situation is totally unacceptable and needs to be fixed.

“I feel heartsick about this whole business that has been going on for far too long. The NLC – and lots of other people and organisations – have been trying to get the AEC to do their job properly for years. But still we see far too many of our mob being left off the electoral roll,” said Mr Bush-Blanasi.

“As I said before, any policy that diminishes the democratic rights of one group of citizens in the NT diminishes the rights of everyone. This isn’t good enough.”

NLC-TV - The five *Sign Up to Stand Up!* short films are available at the *NLC-TV* YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/NorthernLandCouncil> and the NLC’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/northernlandcouncil/>