



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

NLC challenge overturns unsustainable water licence decision

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The announcement this week that a 10,000-megalitre water extraction licence in the Larrimah area has been revoked is a win for the environment and future generations of Territorians.

However, the fact that the licence was granted in the first place highlights the continuing failure of NT government's water planning and licencing process and its lack of consideration for the rights and interests of traditional Aboriginal owners and native title holders.

The Northern Land Council (along with the Environment Centre of the NT separately) successfully challenged the decision by the NT's Acting Water Controller to grant a water extraction licence to the NT Land Corporation – a body that is accountable only to the NT government – in the Larrimah region south of Katherine.

The NLC challenged the decision because it didn't take into account the impacts on the Aboriginal Water Reserve, Aboriginal cultural values and concerns that the licence was unsustainable in the long term.

NLC CEO Marion Scrymgour applauded Minister Natasha Fyles' decision to overturn the licence.

“Clearly the original decision made by the Acting Water Controller was incorrect. We have dodged a bullet that could have had detrimental impacts for generations to come. We had concerns that the decision was not based on the best available scientific information and that it would be unsustainable in the long-term – creating risks to all Territorians,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“The NLC supports sustainable development in the NT and we look forward to working with the NT Government on defining what sustainable water resource management looks like in the Mataranka-Larrimah area.”

NLC Chair Samuel Bush-Blanasi was particularly concerned about the downstream effects of large development proposals. “Underground water flows from the Larrimah area to the Roper River, springs and wetlands. To us it doesn't matter if the land is under a pastoral lease or held by the NT Land Corporation, we still have a responsibility under Aboriginal law to keep that land and the waters that flow under it safe and healthy for future generations,” said Mr Bush-Blanasi.

“Aboriginal owners and custodians for the whole of the Roper River catchment will be watching what happens next very closely. This is an opportunity for the NT Government to do the right thing and sit down and talk with our mob and get it right.”

NLC Media contact: Bob Gosford 0448 226 943