



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Northern Land Council: we need water management systems for this century, not the last one

Friday, 21 January 2022

The Northern Land Council calls on the NT government to bring its water management system into the twenty-first century and in line with its commitments to Aboriginal Territorians.

NLC Chair Samuel Bush-Blanasi says it is time Aboriginal people were taken seriously in water management arrangements across the NT. “We know our country, we are part of our country and we must be part of decisions that affect us. For us, water is life.” he said.

Mr Bush-Blanasi’s comments follow the NLC’s submission in response to the NT government’s Strategic Water Plan Directions Paper.

“No one in the Territory wants us to end up in a situation like they have in the Murray-Darling Basin and this is the government’s chance to make sure we avoid similar catastrophes here in the NT. There are a lot of people greedy for our water out there,” Mr Bush-Blanasi said.

Mr Bush-Blanasi said the government’s directions paper for a Strategic Water Plan for the next 28 years - until 2050 - does not go far enough to protect our precious water resources for future generations. It is not innovative, it ignores the government’s own commitments to engage and consult and the decision makers are just not held accountable.

“What we need is a new approach of integrated land and water management across the Territory with a series of local stakeholder committees. We say the controversial position of Controller of Water Resources should be scrapped in favour of a truly independent Water Commission and the NT’s outdated Water Act should be the subject of a root-and-branch review,” said Mr Bush-Blanasi.

“We repeat our call – that we’ve been making for years - for government to make sure safe and reliable drinking water is available to all Territorians, including those living in remote communities where the water supply often isn’t fit for purpose.

“Substandard water quality and water infrastructure is unacceptable in this day and age and we call on the government to make improved water infrastructure and quality for Aboriginal Territorians a priority, not an afterthought,” said Mr Bush-Blanasi.

Feedback to the NT government on the Directions Paper closes on 4 February 2022 and the NLC urges Territorians to have their say at the NT government Strategic Water Plan Directions Paper website: <https://haveyoursay.nt.gov.au/directionspaper>