



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

The NLC meets with Prime Minister to raise crucial issues for Aboriginal people

13 March 2024

The Full Council of the Northern Land Council (NLC) hosted Federal politicians in Katherine, Northern Territory, yesterday.

The NLC Chair Matthew Ryan welcomed the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, and Lingiari MP Marion Scrymgour to meet with the Northern Land Council's 83 members.

The Chair thanked the guests for coming to the Full Council with a genuine will to listen to the insights of its members – who have an unparalleled understanding of the issues affecting their Country and communities.

The NLC were strong in their message that government services in Aboriginal communities must be developed in partnership with Aboriginal people.

Representatives from all seven NLC regions had the opportunity to raise their key areas of concern. The overarching commonality was that poor services are significantly impairing the lives of people living in remote areas. Acute challenges including failing road infrastructure, the absence of healthcare, poor service quality, and inadequate emergency response were highlighted as requiring the government's immediate attention.

The Prime Minister informed the NLC of the \$4 billion-dollar investment in remote housing that aims to halve overcrowding rates in the NT, which are the worst in Australia.

While the NLC welcomed this announcement, they reminded the politicians that there was important work to be done to ensure more Aboriginal businesses are contracted for housing construction and that local Aboriginal people are trained and employed through the delivery of this program. There were strong calls for any new builds to be of culturally appropriate design and lasting quality, as well as for Aboriginal-led organisations to be supported to manage housing maintenance and repairs into the future.

The NLC emphasised the interconnected nature of housing, employment and education. The Prime Minister and the Council agreed that housing is particularly foundational in allowing communities to be healthy and supporting children to go to school.

Mr Albanese assured the NLC he will be sharing the insights gained from the gathering with National Cabinet members and the Northern Territory (NT) government in meetings this week.

Chair Matthew Ryan thanked the politicians for hearing the views of the NLC, and emphasised that he and his fellow members will be following up on the urgent matters raised to ensure there is real progress.

Jawoyn Elder and Council member Lisa Mumbin OAM welcomed the official party to Katherine for the meeting.

Quotes attributable to Mr Matthew Ryan, Chair of the NLC

- The announcements on new housing are positive. We now expect governments to work with Aboriginal people from remote areas to deliver results.
- Remote communities across the NT experience many of the same issues: desperately requiring upgrades to roads and telecommunications, as well as improvements to public services, especially emergency response capability. These are very serious problems and need to be urgently addressed.
- Our people are ready to work with governments to fix these issues.

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