



Central Land Council holds Senators Price and Liddle to account

At a meeting in Alice Springs today, the Central Land Council Executive expressed its disappointment in Senators Jacinta Price and Kerryne Liddle.

Senator Price

In her address to the National Press Club last Thursday, Senator Price claimed that the colonisation of Australia had a positive impact on Aboriginal people, citing running water and readily available food.

We, the CLC Executive, want you to know that her remarks are hurting members of our community and homelands and we reject her position.

The Senator's denial of history and its ongoing impacts is disgraceful.

Her remarks are hurting the families of the stolen generation, those who lost their land, their wages and their opportunities.

They are an insult to those who survived the Coniston Massacre, the hundreds of Warlpiri, Kaytetye and Anmatyerr families, who were terrorised and murdered in 1928.

Her remarks are hurting the descendants of survivors of all the massacres that have been well documented and appear on the massacre map of Australia, which shows how extensive violent attacks were across the country.

What is not on the map is the administrative violence, pastoral violence, and wholesale theft of our land and waters.

There is a direct link between these historical truths and the gaps we want to close.

Our families still do not all have access to affordable healthy food, drinkable water and sustainable water supplies.

Many of our communities live with water stress, food insecurity, exorbitant costs and living conditions that would not be tolerated by any other Australians.

Senator Liddle

We also reject the claims by Senator Liddle, that land council operations are not transparent and that "there needs to be an inquiry ... to hold them to account, encourage transparency and get the best results for people who need it".

We are proud of the CLC's record of good governance, strong democratic community engagement and 10 years of unqualified financial audit reports from the Australian National Audit Office, and the year-long performance audit in 2022-23.

The CLC is one of very few organisations providing real assistance on the ground to some of the most remote and disadvantaged communities and homelands in Central Australia.

We do not understand why Senator Liddle does not support our work.

We all want organisations delivering services to our people to be accountable and transparent.

Government services account for the lion's share of expenditure aimed at closing the shocking gap in life outcomes between our people and other Australians.

Instead of singling out our community-controlled land councils it would be more useful to look at how much government money allocated for alleviating Aboriginal disadvantage actually hits the ground.

Senator Liddle also said she wanted to know if Indigenous Australians were being "properly consulted".

Our statutory responsibilities include the requirement for proper consultation and the need for free, prior and informed consent. We have well-established and effective protocols and procedures for this purpose.

20 September 2023