



AJ, Lajamanu's new delegate, spoke out against the debit card.

## POLLIES & PUBLIC SERVANTS

The delegates met at Yulara Pulka outstation inspired by the Uluru climb closure celebration a day earlier. Their good mood carried through to their discussions with public servants and politicians on day one of the year's last council meeting.

Ray Griggs, the CEO of the new National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA – formerly PM&C), said the agency wanted more decisions to be made in the regions rather than in Canberra. He said the NIAA's priorities were suicide prevention, school attendance, the voice to parliament and reforms of the Closing the Gap policy, remote housing and the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA). The delegates told Mr Griggs that Aboriginal people should have the

final say about ABA grant funding.

Federal Labor politicians Linda Burney, Malarndirri McCarthy and Warren Snowden re-stated their opposition to the cashless debit card, raising concerns about the lack of consultation with communities in the NT. They also supported replacing the work for the dole scheme CDP with a real jobs program guided by community priorities.

Ahead of the Northern Territory election next year, Chief Minister Michael Gunner and a group of his ministers talked about the NT treaty consultations, school attendance, housing and roads. Delegates asked them not to only consult Aboriginal people just before elections.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE

NT Police Southern Division Superintendent Jody Nobbs listened to the delegates' frustrations about empty police stations, not enough police officers and bad police behaviour. He encouraged people to help police get better at their jobs by challenging everything they do and to also attend community safety meetings.

He said that the federal government funded remote policing well during the Intervention but that its funding agreements with the NT government will finish in 2022. He said that many police stations built during the Intervention now need repairs and improvements and that there is no money for additional officers.



Jody Nobbs addresses the council.



Federal and Territory Labor politicians answered the delegates' questions.



Jeremy Purvis spoke up at the meeting.

## NEXT MEETINGS

**Executive Meeting**  
28 February 2020  
26 - 27 March 2020  
7 - 8 May 2020  
24 - 25 June 2020

**Council Meeting**  
6 - 8 April 2020  
TENNANT CREEK



# NEW CASHLESS DEBIT CARD

The delegates were concerned to hear that the federal government plans to roll out a cashless debit card across the Territory next year, replacing the BasicsCard.

The new card would affect more than 22,000 Territorians, most of them Aboriginal.

The new card would be administered by Indue, not Centrelink. This means people would have to make their own Centrepay arrangements. To start with, they would only get half of their income as cash, but over time the Minister for Families and Social Services could stop cash payments completely.

The delegates said being on compulsory income management is very hard. They criticised that the government did not consult them about the changes. They asked how they would get help if something goes wrong with the new card, especially in places without mobile coverage, and very few landline phones and computers.

The Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) interviewed delegates about their experiences with the BasicsCard. CLC staff showed the video to a Senate inquiry hearing about the proposal in Alice Springs following the council meeting.



CAAMA's Chris Fitzpatrick recorded Lynda Lechleitner's comments on the cashless debit card.

# CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

The delegates heard that the media interviewed deputy chair Barbara Shaw about a CLC media release supporting the climate strike in November and that she spoke at a large Alice Springs rally attended by members and staff.

In the release, chair Sammy Wilson said people living in poor remote community houses are particularly at risk during the longer and hotter summers we are experiencing because of

climate change.

The delegates agreed that their houses are too hot in summer for people to sleep in and that it is hard for kids to go to school without sleep. They resolved to call on governments to include air conditioning in all new and refurbished houses.

The CLC is using its membership of a steering committee on the National Agreement on Remote Housing to advocate for more energy efficient houses.



Barbara Shaw helped Sammy Wilson chair the meeting.

# CLOSING THE GAP

In regional groups, the delegates discussed the Closing the Gap policy. The discussions were part of consultations by the national coalition of peak Aboriginal organisations.

The delegates said they wanted Aboriginal people to be involved in all levels of decision making about the policy. They also wanted to build the Aboriginal controlled

sector and improve mainstream service delivery, for example through hospitals.

They called on governments to drop actions and policies that undermine Closing the Gap aims, such as closing clinics in their communities, the cashless debit card plans and the work for the dole scheme (CDP).



Georgia Stewart and Josie Douglas presented about the Closing the Gap policy reform.

# VOICE TO PARLIAMENT

Constitutional lawyer Megan Davis and Lowitja Foundation chair Pat Anderson updated the delegates about the voice to parliament.

They said Minister Ken Wyatt's view is that the voice will not be enshrined in the constitution.

Council rejected this view and resolved to protect the voice from changing government policies and priorities. It continues to support a co-design process involving Aboriginal people and government.



Megan Davis (above), Pat Anderson and Sally Scales (below) told council about Ken Wyatt's change of heart.

