



NT government bill threatens joint management of parks and water reform

The Central Land Council executive insists that the NT Government withdraw amendments scheduled for debate today which threaten traditional owner rights in jointly managed NT parks and lower the bar for the NT's already poor water regulations even further.

Meeting in Alice Springs today, the executive intervened after the government repeatedly ignored calls to scrap the controversial amendments.

"They are clearly not listening to us, they are being very sneaky and they are only paying lip service to our land and water rights," said CLC chair Sammy Wilson.

"This government is a threat to joint management and the water reforms we have been crying out for."

CLC chief executive Lesley Turner said the amendments to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* are so badly written that they threaten joint management of 20 national parks, such as Watarrka/Kings Canyon and the Iytwelepenty/Davenport Ranges National Park that the traditional owners have leased to the government for 99 years.

"We are very concerned that the amendments, which give the government a new power to authorise development on parks without needing the consent of traditional owners, could breach the leases for jointly managed parks and allow the owners to start a process of terminating them."

"It's scandalous that the government admitted to us that there are problems with its controversial amendments but said that they'll pass them regardless and talk to us later about how to fix them," he said.

"That's what you get when you try to pass complicated legislation quickly and don't have a scrutiny committee or any process of public consultation, accountability and transparency."

Mr Turner also deplored the tabling of amendments to the *Water Act* designed to further reduce the already weak protections of our most precious resource.

"The government pretends it is merely tidying up the legislation but its real aim is to give more power to the water controller who is part of the department that is talking to developers about how they can get water licences.

"The amendments will allow the water controller to grant licences that bypass the strict conditions to protect water and cultural values we desperately need.

"We want to reform the *Water Act* first to remove clear conflicts of interest, for example by making the office of the water controller an independent body," he said.

10 August 2021

Formatted: Font: Bold