



Aboriginal people are the Territory: CLC calls on governments to work with—not against—us

Our council met at Kalkaringi this week, marking 50 years since the historic Gurindji handback, a watershed moment for land rights in the Northern Territory and Australia. The courage of the Gurindji people at Wave Hill changed the nation, but we say the struggle for our rights is far from over.

At the meeting, we set policy priorities for the council's three year-term. They are liveable housing, strong water governance and safe drinking water, protecting land and native title rights, lowering the cost of remote living, strengthening Aboriginal governance and building resilient communities and homelands. We voiced deep concerns about the punitive laws and policies of the NT's Country Liberal Party government.

We condemned the lack of consultation about changes to sacred sites laws and voiced concerns about soaring incarceration rates and racism in the NT police.

These laws and policies do not support our people—they punish them.

Aboriginal people make up over 30 per cent of the Northern Territory and we have been here since time immemorial. We are the Territory.

By ignoring our voices and rights, the CLP government is turning its back on our communities and making an already dire situation worse.

We heard from Labor's federal member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour, NT opposition leader Selena Uiibo and Labor members Chansey Paech, Dheran Young and Manuel Brown. They said they were listening to our concerns and recognised just how serious the impacts of these policies are becoming for our people.

We want the Australian government to hold the NT government to account, ensure funding received for Aboriginal Territorians benefits us and alleviates our disadvantage, rather than used for other things or to harm us.

Governments must work with—not against—us to deliver real solutions.

NT Aboriginal affairs minister Steve Edgington told us he will begin discussions in Central Australia and the Barkly to bring back smaller local government councils to communities.

The Territory coordinator downplayed the powers of his role and promised to consult with Aboriginal people before making decisions that affect them. He said he did not see a role for himself in the Singleton Station horticulture project.

The acting police commissioner was pressed on what concrete steps are being taken to stamp out racism in the force that is costing Aboriginal lives. He told us that the anti-racism strategy will align with the recommendations from the Kumanjayi Walker coronial and have an implementation plan.

We look forward to joining the Freedom Day Walk today, following in the footsteps of the 1966 Wave Hill Walk-off to Lipananku (Victoria River).

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