



EMBARGOED 25 JANUARY 2026 10PM

Alyawarr senior knowledge holders recognised on Australia Day

The Central Land Council congratulates brothers Frankie Holmes, Casey Holmes and Donald Thompson—three highly respected Alyawarr [AI-YAH-worrer] leaders—on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for their outstanding service to the Indigenous community across the Northern Territory.

The brothers are senior traditional owners for Antarrengeny [An-tar-DING-in-ya] country and are widely recognised as senior knowledge holders across the Alyawarr region in the east of the Territory.

Their cultural authority, profound knowledge of ceremonies and songlines, deep connection to country, commitment to sharing their knowledge and the protection of significant sites have made them trusted sources of guidance well beyond their own country.

Speaking on behalf of the brothers, Frankie Holmes said, “it’s the way we’ve worked for so many different places and communities. Helping people right across, in this great area. We’ve done it the right way. After all the good work that we’ve done, we feel it’s really great to be recognised and to get this award.”

They have also been strong supporters of the campaign against the controversial Singleton water licence, which will be heard by the High Court next month.

Frankie Holmes explained, “it’s water that’s special and it’s just not replaceable. It must be looked after. Without water, our body and our blood and everything depends on water. Without water, we finish.”

All three have been elected repeatedly to represent their communities on the Central Land Council.

They contributed their extensive cultural knowledge to the CLC’s work on the Sandover, Kurundi, Singleton, Davenport, Tennant Creek Station and Epenarra native title claims and the Angarapa (Utopia), Alyawarr, Anurrete and Wakaya Alyawarre land claims.

The brothers have taught generations of school students and are involved with Codes 4 Life, an Aboriginal men’s program which aims to reconnect men with their responsibilities and communities.

They also contributed to the Alyawarr-English Dictionary, the Alyawarr Picture Dictionary and other significant cultural resources.

The elders are among the 127 eminent men and women who contributed to the CLC’s oral history collection *Every Hill Got a Story* and have featured in the ABC’s *First Weapons* program.

Their lifelong efforts have played a vital role in strengthening the continuation of Alyawarr law, language and culture, ensuring it is passed on to future generations.

“Looking after land and country, especially like scared trees, is very, very important for us. Ancestors hand it over to us to look after these waters and these lands. This is very important to keep it going and for us to keep passing it on.”

[Video interview and high res images can be downloaded here.](#)