



CLC to seek instructions following Supreme Court decision on Singleton water licence

The Central Land Council acknowledges the NT Supreme Court’s decision today to dismiss legal challenges to a controversial water licence.

“We’re considering the judgement carefully and will explain it to the native title holders and remote communities affected by the water licence and seek their instructions,” CLC chief executive Les Turner said.

The court’s decision comes two years after the native title holders’ Mpwerempwer [pronounced emPUrra-empurra] Aboriginal Corporation asked it to set aside an NT government decision to grant the licence for Singleton Station for up to 40 gigalitres per year – the largest amount of groundwater the NT has ever given away – free of charge.

In February 2022, the corporation and the Arid Lands Environment Centre took court action against then NT Families Minister Kate Worden’s decision to grant co-defendant Fortune Agribusiness the 30-year groundwater extraction licence.

Acting on behalf of Mpwerempwer, the CLC argued that parts of the licence are invalid because the minister didn’t comply with the NT Water Act, failed to consider Aboriginal cultural values and other important matters.

“The water licence decision is unconscionable considering the impacts of climate change on highly vulnerable desert communities,” Mr Turner said at the time.

The CLC believes the groundwater licence decision highlights the need for robust and transparent water planning in the NT.

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