

FREE

# LANDRIGHTS NEWS

August 2023

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## CENTRAL AUSTRALIA



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EDITORIAL

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COVER



Voting for a better future: CLC delegate Jimmy Frank held his grandson as he signed the Barunga Voice Declaration. "Our ancestors fought for our country, they built a foundation for us. We should vote yes," he said.

CLC MEETINGS

**19-20 September**  
Executive  
Alice Springs

**Date TBC**  
Council  
Yulara Pulka

**17-18 October**  
Executive  
Alice Springs

# Land council leaders bring 'voice



The chairs of the Northern Territory land councils presented the Barunga Voice Declaration to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

CHAIRS and delegates of the Northern Territory land councils took their time debating and shaping the Barunga Voice Declaration – their joint call on all Australians to support a voice to parliament.

When they were done, their vote could not have been clearer. All in favour, one abstention.

The declaration of the elected representative of tens of thousands of Aboriginal people in remote communities, homelands, towns and town camps across the NT is as humble as it is profound.

It calls "for the recognition of our peoples in our still young constitution by enshrining our voice to the parliament and executive government, never to be rendered silent with the stroke of a pen again" (see page 3).

Gathered on the traditional lands of the Bagala (Jawoyn) group for a joint meeting in June, the land councils invited

Australians to "right the wrongs of the past and deal with the serious issues impacting First Nations peoples...and unite our country".

After the vote the delegates lined up to sign the declaration.

The following morning female delegates of the Northern, Central and Tiwi land council, took turns reading out the declaration to Linda Burney, the Minister for Indigenous Australians. They got a standing ovation.

The declaration honours the historic Barunga Statement, which the late land council leaders Yunupingu and Wenten Rubuntja presented to then Prime Minister Bob Hawke 35 years earlier in the very same place.

"The call for constitutional recognition and a voice to parliament is about respect and coming together as a country to build a future we can all be proud of," said deputy Anindilyaka Land Council chair Thomas Amagula.

"This is what those old leaders started back in 1988 and we stand here today to carry on the spirit of their legacy."

Tiwi Land Council chair, Gibson Farmer Illortaminni, wants "to be at the table when decisions are made that affect our land, culture, and future".

"I urge all Australians to join us in embracing this opportunity for positive change and vote Yes to ensure our voices are heard and respected when important decisions are being made that affect us," he said.

The strong support of grass-roots representatives for a Yes vote in the referendum later this year exposes one of the many pieces of misinformation spread by the 'no' campaign.

Central Land Council chair, Matthew Palmer reminded everyone that the vast majority of Aboriginal people want the voice to become a permanent part of the country's 'rule book'.

## Laramba celebrates happy end to water worries. Who is next?

THE HALF-EMPTY pallet of cardboard boxes on the veranda of the regional council office was Laramba's last delivery of safe drinking water, and the locals couldn't be happier.

Lining up for a celebratory BBQ next door, they were re-filling their cups from the outdoor taps.

"We had these boxes, but since last week we've been tasting the tap water and it tastes just like normal water," Virginia Fry said. "We've been so excited about drinking it and making tea with it. We all got happy."

Normality has been a long time coming to the community, about 200 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs.

It arrived in the form of a new water treatment plant that finally went on line in late April.

Before the plant began to filter Laramba's tap water the levels of uranium were almost three times higher than Australian drinking water guidelines allow.

A new technology called 'ion-exchange' has changed all that.

In a purpose-built shed, half an hour down the road from the community,

big blue tanks filled with tiny beads of a resin that attach themselves like magnets to even smaller traces (ions) of uranium are removing the poison from the water.

The tanks need to be emptied regularly and the resin transported to a hazardous waste facility.

Essential Services Minister Selena Uibo's department was still working out where to store the waste as she flew in to open the plant, but nobody was going to let this spoil the festive mood.

**Continued p.5**



Laramba residents with Josie Douglas (second on left) at the opening of the water treatment plant.

# from the bush' to the people's house

“Please don't let the nay-sayers in Canberra confuse you, and support us by voting 'yes',” he said.

When the chairs addressed the media together, Northern Land Council chair Samuel Bush-Blasani made clear that the referendum will be about recognising Aboriginal people as the first inhabitants of this continent, in the way they want to be recognised.

“Like us or not, you have to accept us because we've been here for 50,000 years.”

A few weeks later, the four leaders were on their way to chilly Canberra, to take the declaration to the parliament and face the media again.

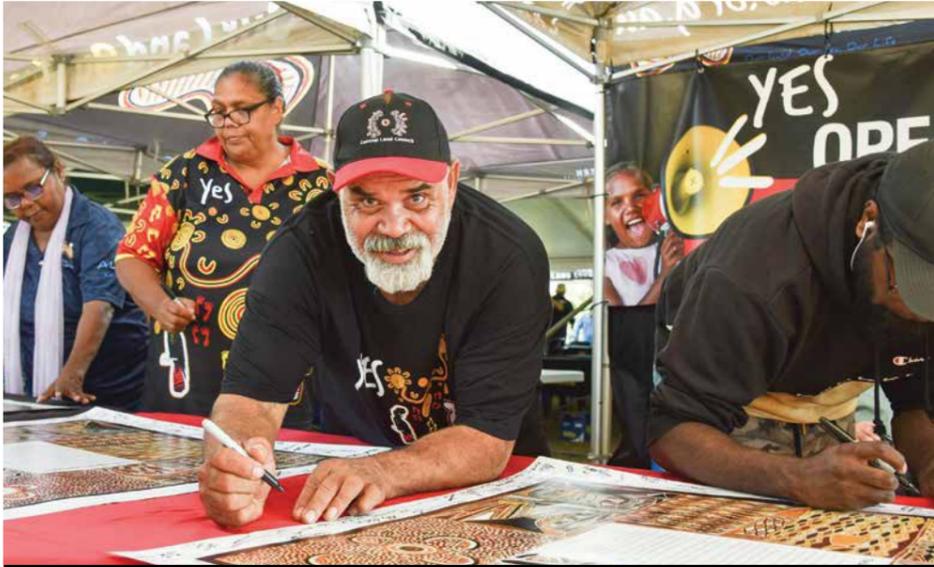
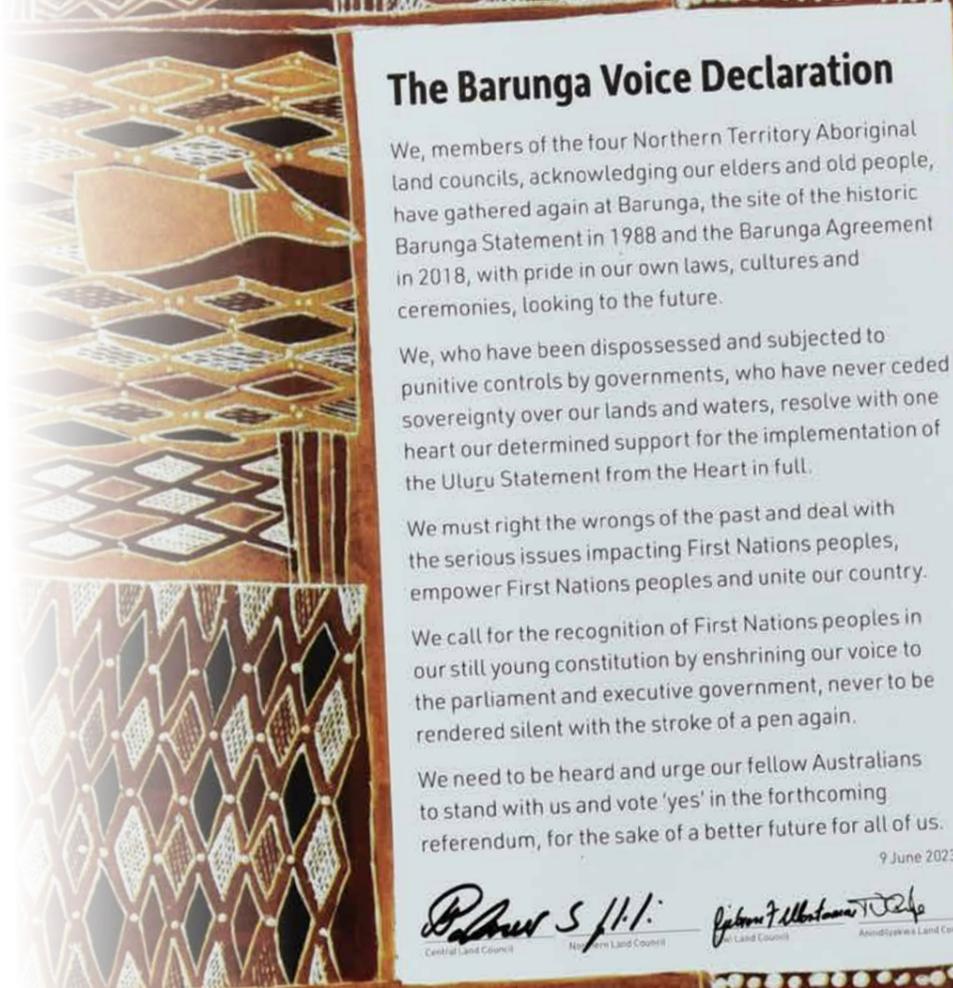
Mr Bush-Blasani presented the declaration as “the voice from the bush calling on all Australians to recognise us, support us, and help us make the changes so urgently needed for a better future, together,” before Prime Minister Anthony Albanese unveiled it.

## “Unite our country.”

“It's an incredibly powerful message to this parliament,” Mr Albanese said. “It's very clear that overwhelmingly First Nations people support constitutional change through a voice. And that is what this represents.”

“Have a walk around this building and decide where you would like it,” he invited the chairs.

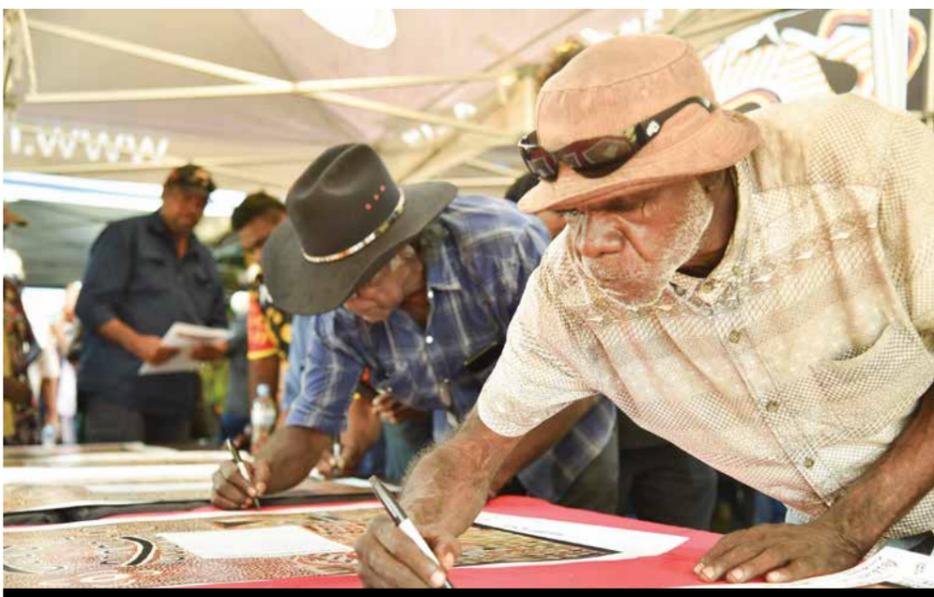
Mr Palmer had a suggestion. “The Barunga Declaration deserves to hang alongside the Barunga Statement on the walls of the people's house for all times and make future generations of Australians proud,” he said.



Sammy Wilson signed the Barunga Voice Declaration.



Warren Williams and Geoffrey Matthews signed up together.



Ross Purvis and Malcolm Ross signed the declaration at Barunga.



Mildred Inkamala and Roseanne Ellis (right) signed with NLC members at the joint meeting.

# Going backwards: why the NT needs a voice to power

IT'S A TITLE nobody wants – Australian champion in growing the divide between black and white citizens.

New data from the Productivity Commission shows that this sad record belongs to the Northern Territory.

The NT is going backwards on eight out of the 17 socio-economic Closing the Gap targets, and for the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT (APO NT) it's a sign that something needs to change, and fast.

**“We need a voice to parliament so our solutions can be heard.”**

“Business as usual is failing our people,” acting chair of the North Australian Justice Agency, Dr John Paterson, said as yet another set of disappointing numbers came out in July.

The APO NT convenor said the data shows why a voice to power is nowhere as important as in the Territory.

“We need a voice to parliament so our solutions can be heard. The NT has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people, but it lacks a real whole-of-government commitment to implementing our solutions.”

While states such as Western Australia and Victoria are making real progress on Closing the Gap targets, the NT is getting worse from an already low base.

“The Closing the Gap partnership depends on the recognition of our expertise,” Donna Ah Chee, acting chief executive of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the NT said.

Ms Ah Chee and other members of the APO NT governing group are most concerned about the NT's adult imprisonment numbers, which are increasing at the highest rate in the country.

They said the Northern Territory Government has walked away from its commitment to implementing the recommendations from the Don Dale Royal Commission, and is instead doubling down on “punitive aspects of the justice system that we know do not work”.

Only in the NT is the employment gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people getting wider.

“We have long presented alternatives to the failed and costly Community Development Program (CDP) that will create real jobs in our communities,” Dr John Paterson said. “It is wasteful and a missed opportunity not to formally partner with us on solutions.”

While Aboriginal youth everywhere else are increasingly getting educated, trained and employed, young Territorians are experiencing the worst outcomes in the country.

For APO NT it's a sign that the Territory's education system is failing them, and they called on the NT government to reform school funding “so remote schools are not missing out on needs-based resourcing”.

The gap in the life expectancy for Aboriginal women in the NT is also growing.

Aboriginal women here die almost 13 years younger than non-Aboriginal women.

The NT has the highest domestic violence and family violence rates in the country, and murders of Aboriginal women by their partners are now subject of an inquest by the NT Coroner.

The inquest has heard of a 117 per cent increase in domestic and family violence reports over the past decade, with a further 73 per cent increase expected over the next 10 years, according to police modelling.

Despite these appalling statistics, many of the safe houses in the NT are in a state of disrepair and neglect, if they exist at all.

“We call on governments to invest in Aboriginal-owned-and-led programs to support women's safety,” the APO NT leaders said.

Housing in the NT remains almost twice as crowded as in all other states and territories.

Jerome Cubillo, chief executive of the NT Indigenous Business Network, hopes it will lead to a new way of

**“It's one thing to be at the table and another to be heard and listened to.”**

The APO NT sees the new National Partnership Agreement on Housing and Homelands as an opportunity for the NT to invest in closing this gap. Supporters of a voice to parliament say that investments based on its advice will save money because less will be wasted on programs that don't work.

working with government. “At the moment, there is an inconsistency between the rhetoric and the reality,” he said.

“It's one thing to be at the table and another to be heard and listened to.”

Rene Kulitja, Mutitjulu

“We are all thinking about this voice. This is important for Anangu to understand and talk up about, to say yes for the sake of our future.

We now have more young people than ever, so right now there's a great opportunity to grasp. Really think about it and talk up. Say yes.”



Michael Jones, Tennant Creek

“My vote will be 'yes', from the heart. The voice to me is a way to get to where we want to go. In the old peoples' footsteps, to get to where we want to, to make some changes that we need and to be recognised.

No-one else can change it unless we step up and do something for ourselves. I want you to vote yes for the referendum.”

Dianne Stokes, Mangalawarra

“The voice is our people who we are going to elect to go up to be the voices for the country. Every time we talk to the government they won't take it in. So we want someone who is going to be there to talk about it and come back home to let us know the reply.

The voice is important because when we talk about things on the ground in our community we want that voice to go out to the government, so we have a person who we elect in that position, to go to and talk to the government about what we want in our country and homelands.

We are crying out for help, for our water, for homelands. Now that we are going to say yes for the voice it's going to be good because we're going to have someone there who is going to be talking for us.”



YES



Valerie Martin, Yuendumu

“Say yes so our voice might be heard in the parliament, by the government, for our needs and our kids' future. So that another intervention won't come along we need to say yuwai.”



Craig Woods, Mutitjulu

“I first heard about the voice six or seven years ago at the regional dialogue at Ross River. We talked about creating a statement and calling it the Uluru Statement, and taking it to parliament.

Right now, a lot of Anangu are living as if we are almost homeless. The politicians from Canberra don't really care for us. If you vote yes for the voice to parliament we will be able to take care of our own people.”

Valerie Paterson, Lajamanu

“Having the right to be heard by the parliament and the government will open a door for us. It will make a great change for us as the sovereign people of this land. We hold the song lines, ceremonies and dances. We practice our law and culture every day. We are the grass roots people and it's time we stood up for ourselves. We have voices, many voices in one, and we believe putting this voice into parliament will help us change our lives around, so that we can lead normal, happy, humble lives. It's a chance of a lifetime for the voice to get into parliament so we can be heard, so the government can really recognise us as Yapa people belonging to this land. I vote yuwai – yes!”





Max Tilmouth, Ron Hagan, Adrian Dixon, Peter Stafford and Peter Cool are pleased to finally have safe drinking water in Laramba.

## Laramba celebrates happy end to water worries. Which community is next?

### Continued from p. 2

Before cutting the ribbon, flanked by Attorney General Chansey Paech, Ms Uibo assured the community that safe drinking water was one of the Northern Territory government's top priorities.

Waiting for her in the midday sun, a group of local women passed a glass vial of resin beads between themselves.

More than an hour earlier they had piled into a coaster bus to see the new plant in action.

Paech to giving media interviews and taking the NT government to court.

The residents told the NT's Civil and Administrative Tribunal that their landlord, the housing department, had a duty to ensure safe drinking water, but lost the case.

Last year, the government announced funding for Laramba's \$6.8 million water treatment plant and, agreed to supply free boxes of water for the duration of the build.

"We've been trying really hard,

"Land council was fighting, and me and Ron were fighting for water and it's here now. We've got the good water now. All that worry is finished now. We fixed it now.

"We've got it easy now, for water. That's good for the next generation. I'm feeling good."

Ms Fry won't miss the bad old days of forking out lots of money for bottled water at the store and worrying about everyone's health.

"Some kids, when they played around and drank that water, said 'I'm feeling sick in the stomach', but today we're all happy, so excited. The future is looking really bright, starting from today," she said.

Mr Paech said the government was now working to improve water quality in neighbouring communities such as Yuelamu and Yuendumu, as well.

**"We've been trying really hard, pushing government [for] funding for this treatment plant."**

Ms Fry said their spirits were high. "They ladies were really excited. They were saying 'we're right, now we don't need them boxes. We've got tap water for cooking damper and all that now'."

Behind the wheel of the bus and wearing a broad grin, Central Land Council delegate Ron Hagan knows a thing or two about long and difficult journeys.

There is little he and the community have not tried over the years – from meetings with local member Chansey

pushing government [for] funding for this treatment plant," Mr Hagan told the assembled crowd.

"The CLC was supporting us all the way along. Chansey been coming in now and then for meetings, ABC people been come along [reporting] proper story about the water."

His fellow delegate Peter Stafford said Laramba's struggle for safe water was "a little bit hard".

"We talked about water for a long time, we worried for the diabetics," he said.



Resident with the resin that takes the uranium out of the drinking water.

## Our water rights: nine things we want governments to know

In April the Central Land Council delegates agreed on the principles that will guide the CLC's advocacy work.

### The council said 'good water governance'

1. looks after Aboriginal peoples' water rights and interests;
2. lets them make decisions about water from or affecting their country;
3. manages water and land together;
4. makes sure country has enough water to stay healthy;
5. has laws that say decisions about water must be based on good science, Aboriginal cultural knowledge and protects sacred sites;
6. makes sure decisions about water are open (transparent) and fair to all, including Aboriginal people;
7. supports Aboriginal jobs, businesses and lives;
8. makes sure developers deal honestly with Aboriginal people, respect their decisions and, where projects go ahead, they really benefit Aboriginal communities;
9. protects their human right to good, safe drinking water and water for their own development.

# Water rights: “disgraceful” plan and “pretend consultations” slammed



"No negotiation with us Aboriginal people. We had one meeting, that's it," Alekarenge community leader Graham Beasley said.

TRADITIONAL OWNERS from the region around Singleton Station have had enough of what the NT government likes to call 'consultation'.

Alekarenge community leader Graham Beasley does not feel heard. "That's our country. What's going to happen to our sacred trees? We should be involved."

"We don't have enough information from the government. No negotiation with us Aboriginal people. We had one meeting, that's it. They say they'll take everything on notice and that's all, nothing comes back."

## “Traditional owners might as well have stayed away since the plan only pays lip service to the concerns they raised.”

Central Land Council chief executive Les Turner slammed the “pretend consultations” about the “disgraceful” water planning for the area affected by the controversial irrigated horticulture proposal on Singleton Station in media interviews and opinion articles.

“Traditional owners might as well have stayed away since the plan only pays lip service to the concerns they raised,” Mr Turner said.

He criticised the “misleading presentations by government water planners who spruiked out-of-date information” and said the resulting draft plan for the region “unmasks the government’s disregard for Aboriginal rights and sites” and “disrespects their concerns about site protection”.

The draft water plan has been opposed twice by the government’s own water advisory committee for the region, which includes the CLC.

In CLC consultations with traditional owners on the draft plan, Mr Beasley said traditional owners “will get sick” if they can’t protect their water sites.

“That’s our culture – we can’t give it away,” he said. “They have already taken everything. What more do they want?”

Water advisory committees are the main avenue for Territorians to try to influence water planning.

The committee members, who had been chosen by the government, rejected two earlier versions of the draft plan, but for now continue to work with the government in good faith.

The committee told the government unanimously that its estimate of how much groundwater can be sustainably taken is too high.

One of the goals of the old water plan for the vast region south of Tennant

Creek was to protect Aboriginal sites, plants and animals.

Traditional owners fear the new plan the government has released for comment puts these cultural values at great risk.

Under the draft plan the government only needs to “consider” Aboriginal cultural values as one set of values amongst many others when it decides about water licences.

“This is unacceptable because many sacred sites and practices in the region depend on groundwater and the ecosystems it sustains,” said Mr Turner.

“Any drop-off in the water table risks irreversible damage to sacred springs, soakages and trees. Our country and culture will be sacrificed if water extraction is not carefully managed and limited.”

“The plan has now been rejected for the second time and has no social license,” he said.

“The government has released it because its process of box-ticking has finally hit a brick wall.”

What makes the process all the more galling for the traditional owners is that the NT government claims on

the international stage to respect their cultural and ecological knowledge.

Mr Walker said NT Water Minister Lauren Moss is not being truthful when she claims to be listening to traditional owners and residents of affected remote communities.

“She hasn’t come to Tennant Creek, she hasn’t come to Alekarenge, consulted TOs, nothing. Still today, nothing. She’s overseas saying she’s been consulting with us, nothing. She hasn’t done anything.”

“I don’t think it’s true they’ve been helping us with our water,” Mr Beasley added. “We’re fighting for our water. Better way is to work together.”

Mr Turner said the government has demonstrated “continued and complete contempt for Aboriginal cultural and environmental values when it comes to water planning”.

He said the draft plan offers no protection for Aboriginal sites or the environment.

“The government has failed to seek prior informed consent from traditional owners and share decision-making – principles it promised to uphold under the Closing the Gap reforms.”

### A win for traditional owners

In late March the CLC and its supporters celebrated a small

victory, when the NT Environmental Protection Agency decided that the Singleton horticulture project must undergo the highest level of environmental impact assessment.

## The project could be on hold for “a couple of years”.

The decision means the agency has listened to the many voices and experts who had called for a cautious approach.

Its chair, Dr Paul Vogel, told the ABC the project could be on hold for “a couple of years”, while the agency finds out what the project’s massive water licence and land clearing would really do to the country.

The CLC has challenged the government’s decision to approve a 40 giga litre water licence in the NT Supreme Court on behalf of the traditional owners.

They are hoping an even bigger victory in the court will come in time for Christmas.

### NT agribusiness strategy not ‘co-designed’

In June Mr Turner hit back at claims by Agribusiness minister Paul Kirby to have consulted with the CLC about the government’s agriculture strategy.

“Sure enough, the fingerprints of big agribusiness are all over the new strategy,” he said, calling the claims “a new low”.

The strategy proposes to change the laws around pastoral leases and speed up approval processes that are not based on free, prior and informed consent.

“It would fast-track the clearing of vast tracts of cattle stations for thirsty cotton and horticulture crops while sidelining native title holders.

“While the government has been busy strategising with industry, it has denied us a seat at the table where decisions about our future on our traditional land and waters are made,” Mr Turner said.

“It excluded us because we oppose the wholesale mining of our precious groundwater, the degradation of our sites, threats to native plants and animals and the further erosion of weak native title and ineffective site protection laws.”



**CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL**

## LOOKING FOR WORK?



The CLC’s employment support team helps job seekers to write resumes and job applications and to prepare for interviews.

We support employers to develop strategies to find and keep Aboriginal workers.

We also talk to schools and community groups about job opportunities.

**Contact the CLC on 8951 6211 or [employmentunit@clc.org.au](mailto:employmentunit@clc.org.au)**

**Voice to help fight attacks on land and water rights**

The joint land council meeting at Barunga in June resolved to fight the NT government's assault on native title and water rights.

"We have been asking for too long and waiting for too long for stronger water laws that respect the knowledge, rights and responsibilities of Aboriginal people.

We welcome bold and strong water reform, but it must be developed in consultation with Aboriginal people

**The voice is "our best chance in generations ... It would allow our grass roots representatives to be heard before any laws and policies that would harm us can reach parliament".**

from the start, and protect and promote our rights and interests to water. Water is for all of us," the resolution passed at the meeting reads.

Land council delegates also called on Australians to vote for a constitutionally enshrined voice to parliament because, in the words of one delegate, "if you're not at the

table you're on the menu".

Mr Turner said the voice is "our best chance in generations to make sure greedy developers can't have our rights to land, water and a prosperous and culturally rich future for breakfast".

"It would allow our grass roots representatives to be heard before any laws and policies that would harm us can reach parliament.

It would help level a playing field that is tilted far too heavily towards powerful commercial lobbyists."

YES



Sammy Wilson, Mutitjulu

"We asked the country to come and walk with us. This is for all of us, tjungu (together), we must be tjungu. History is calling! We're going to vote yes."



Raymond Palmer, Ltyentye Apurte

"I support the voice so we can go forward and get heard at parliament. The voice means power to us. We want to make the voice really strong, so the government can understand our rights and our plans for the future."



Matthew Palmer, Corkwood Bore

"It's time for us to have a say in the laws and policies that affect us. We've tried everything else – promises, petitions, marches – and nothing has closed the gap. When we are being heard we will achieve positive change on the ground, in Alice Springs and in the bush. Our mob needs the power of a voice to parliament because we want to be heard and not forgotten."

Geoff Shaw, Mount Nancy town camp, Alice Springs

"We need a change to the constitution to give us recognition that we have prior ownership of this country. I reckon it's going to make a difference. Once we've influenced the whole of Australia to accept the voice then we can try to relieve the social issues that are not just happening in Alice Springs. If government agencies came to the party and had a co-ordinated approach maybe we'll get somewhere!

Aboriginal people are sick and tired of waiting. Most of the Aboriginal society is behind the Prime Minister. I implore him to go ahead with having the referendum this year. Then we'll start to talk about treaty."



Below: On the way back from their voice information session in Alpururulam (Lake Nash) the CLC voice team ran into another voice supporter on the Barkly Highway. Former Liberal MP Pat Farmer was a third of the way through his 14,400 kilometre trek around the country to campaign for a yes vote in the referendum. He was on his way to Camooweal and Mount Isa when he stopped for a photo. The CLC will welcome his arrival in Alice Springs and join him for a run around Uluru in October.



Joseph Zimran, Ikuntji

"Our voice to the parliament that's the way to work together. Black and white, we'll stand together for our younger generation, instead of kids running around in town. Bring them back to our communities. We've got our elders still around for the next generation. They are watching us, so we're going to say yes to the voice to parliament. The voice is about the right direction, looking after our country and culture. It's a great opportunity that we can stand up with this voice and say yes."



Margaret Smith, Imanpa

"The voice is important to Anangu. We'd like to be in there with the government, to speak up for our issues and our communities. It's going to change our community, for better living, better health, better housing and education. It's a big opportunity. We're going to say yes to the voice."



# Native title to protect sacred salt lake sites from mining

ANANGU traditional owners want to use their newly-recognised native title rights to protect the culturally and ecologically sensitive salt lake system known as the Karinga Lakes.

Celebrating a native title consent determination over the area, approximately 250 kilometres southwest of Alice Springs, traditional owner Cyril McKenzie said mining and exploration activities had done enough harm already.

“Salt lake is damaged over the years with mining. Now we can say ‘protect the land’. It is part of the tjukurpa. It is connected,” he said.

The determination area covers more than 10,000 square kilometres of pastoral lease land, including Warltunta (Erlunda Station), Maratjura (Lyndavale Station) and Tjulu (Curtin Springs Station).

Some of the songlines that cross and create the lake system across the three stations are part of a major men’s tjukurpa.

“The whole lake is important to old people. It is sacred to men and women,” traditional owner Mr Wongaway said.

“It’s important to all of us because we’re connected to the country,” traditional owner Caroline Coombs said.

Anangu have cared for the area since time immemorial.

“I was born on the land ancestors slept on,” Mr McKenzie, said. “Anangu look after the land. Follow tjukurpa.”

The traditional owners asked the Central Land Council to lodge the Karinga Lakes claim to help protect it against potash mining by Verdant Minerals.

The company holds exploration licences overlapping the lakes and has carried out drilling and excavation.

Anangu and Lyndavale pastoralists alerted the CLC in 2013 that these activities had damaged the lakes.



Judge Bromberg with Marissa and Nancy Thompson, two of dozens of traditional owners of the Karinga Lakes determination area.

Ms Coombs said mining has turned a formerly white salt lake “brown and horrible”.

“Mining comes in and destroys the land. It’s all about money. It’s land that has protected us for many years and we need to protect the land as well,” she said.

The CLC carried out extensive anthropological and legal research and filed the claim on behalf of 15 families in 2020.

Every family was represented as Judge Mordecai Bromberg, from the Federal Court, handed down the determination on 5 April.

Big rains forced the court to sit in the Imanpa community instead of on Maratjura, but they didn’t stop the families from performing inma

(ceremony) for the visitors.

Judge Bromberg read out a list of names of traditional owners who passed away while waiting for the determination before he congratulated the families on their achievement.

He was presented with a vase by artist and native title holder Derek Thompson, of Ernabella Arts, which depicts wanampi (water snake), a totem for the lakes, and shared a cake featuring a map of the lake systems.

His determination grants Anangu the right to hunt and perform ceremonies on their land, as well as to be consulted about its use, but it doesn’t give them a veto right over mining and exploration.

The native title holders appealed to Verdant Minerals to respect their rights as ngurritja (traditional owners), and leave the lakes alone.

“We want no more digging holes on the land,” said Mr Wongaway.

“We’re still fighting for this land. It’s mil-milpa (sacred) country, we’re worried for it,” Alan Wilson, who learned the cattle trade on Tjulu, added. “Mining companies and government should listen to the country.”

For Ms Coombs the native title holders are the voice of the country.

“When we say wiya [no – to mining] they should not do anything. We need a voice,” she said.

Imanpa community leader Tanya Luckey had a message for the company.

“We would like to be recognised as the traditional owners of the land. Anything that happens on the land

– work with us, together,” she said.

Pastoralist Ross Stanes, whose family has leased Maratjura for more than 100 years, agreed that areas of cultural and ecological significance should be protected.

He told the ABC he hopes the determination will “strengthen the relationship between us and the Anangu people”.

**“When we say wiya [no – to mining] they should not do anything. We need a voice.”**

“My father grew up with a lot of the people who were named today and we’ve had a long, long relationship with them,” he said.

Ngurritja are disappointed that the National Native Title Tribunal has so far failed to protect the lakes, but now have fresh hope that native title will strengthen their case.

The companies planning to mine the lakes have told their shareholders that they are looking into what the native determination means for their plans, but they haven’t tried to speak with traditional owners yet.



Della Pearce, Elsie Luckey, Margaret Smith and Caroline Coombs cut the Karinga Lakes cake.

Rachel Perkins, Alice Springs

“Our people have spent decades campaigning for the opportunity of a better life. We’ve never been more determined or more united. The voice is our best shot, let’s take it.”

Leslie Manda, Alice Springs

“This is an important time for Australia. Come and vote, make sure you are enrolled to participate in this revolutionary process. Our message to people is to pass by our [Central Desert Regional Council] offices if they need support to enrol. We have support available in all our communities.”



Big thumbs up for the voice from Pmara Jutunta, one of the communities visited by the CLC's voice team since March.

YES

YES

Ken Lechleitner, Alice Springs

"The voice means the opportunity for our fellow Aussies to accept us into the constitution. That's all we want, to have an input, to have a say, and our parliament shapes the rest. We've got to trust our system. [The voice] allows us to be involved in writing the kind of laws that we want to live by, to share the abundance of resources and wealth creation opportunities that this country really offers, and to prosper together. It's not about us and them. It's about us collectively truly defining ourselves, who we are as a nation. A yes is a very important vote for us all in shaping a new direction. Let's make history!"



Thomas Mayo, Darwin

"Housing issues, the problems with the justice system, infrastructure in our communities, the way programs are funded – this is something that all our people across the country have in common. When we set up this voice that a hostile government can't take away from us then we're able to have a stronger voice on all of those things and get better outcomes for our people. Everybody else across the country is looking at you mob because this is where the Barunga Statement happened. This is where Gurindji mob walked off, and all the other proud things we did here in the Territory, and they are looking to you guys for leadership."



Annie Morrison, Tennant Creek

"Yuwai! Say yes for our people. The voice is for our mob. We need the voice to speak really strong for our people to parliament."



Johnathan Thurston, Townsville

"Our young people deserve the chance to be their best. I work closely with schoolkids in the Yarrabah community in Queensland. I've seen the obstacles they face. Nobody understands that better than their local community. Giving them a say will mean more of our kids reach their potential. That's what the voice is about." Photo Mark Kolbe, via Getty Images



Graham Beasley, Alekarengge  
"Yes to our voice!"



# WATER PARK A BIG SPLASH FOR COMMUNITY



Lajamanu kids at the opening of the community's water park.

LAJAMANU'S new community-funded water park is a big hit with kids and adults alike.

The covered water park in the middle of the community is a testament to the determination of the community's Granites Mine Affected Area (GMAAAC) committee to provide more engaging and fun activities for Lajamanu youth.

Last September the whole community gathered to celebrate the water park opening and everyone got a bit wet as they enjoyed the water features.

The water park has got the thumbs up from parents who are happy there is another place for the kids to cool down other than Hooker Creek.

"It's good for community instead of kids going swimming in dirty waters at the creek and getting ear infections," Kylie Patrick said.

The GMAAAC committee member

and water park employee believes that playing in clean water means fewer eye, ear and skin problems.

"I like going there to the water park. I don't like creek. It's safer for me there at the water park," seven-year-old Shikalah said.

**"It's good to see families and kids use it."**

Open five days a week, the water park has become a popular place for the community and had plenty of use over school holidays. There is also a separate covered playground area surrounded by artificial turf and toilets are nearby.

"I like the swings and go with friends. I feel happy," nine-year-old

Cleveland Patterson said.

It's early days for the water park, but the community hopes that its 'No School – No Splash' policy will help lift school attendance.

The committee developed the policy with the school and the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC), which operates the park.

Children who go to school get a wristband which is their entry ticket to the water park. No school, no wristband, no water park.

The WYDAC runs the water park and has GMAAAC funding to employ up to eight Yapa supervisors – two per shift. The workers are also trained in pump room operations.

"The water park is really good, we're all working," Joe Marshall, GMAAAC committee member and water park worker, said.

"We'd like to say thank you to

GMAAAC and land council, it's a really good thing," Mr Marshall said.

Tracie Patrick, another employee of the water park, likes going to work.

"I like it because it's good to see families and kids use it. Parents with kids. I enjoy working there."

Lajamanu's GMAAAC committee paid \$3.8 million to NT Playground and Surfacing to build the water park. Aboriginal-owned company Ekistica (part of the Centre for Appropriate Technology) managed the construction with guidance from a four-member GMAAAC subcommittee and the CLC community development unit.

The subcommittee kept other residents informed about the project's progress, were involved in important moments of the build and drove the community development process.

# NGUYARRAMINI CATTLE YARD CREATES JOBS

A NEW holding yard and fencing at Nguyarramini have put cattle management into the hands of the outstation's traditional owners.

The residents of the homeland, 500 kilometres northeast of Alice Springs, want to better look after their growing herd and sell cattle for a profit.

Creating jobs and training opportunities for younger family members and encouraging them to

spend more time at Nguyarramini is also part of the plan.

The outstation's working group designed and assembled new holding yards with neighbour Ken Ford, of the Tennant Creek Station.

Working group members Michael Murphy, Geoffrey Murphy, Alfred Corbett and Nicholas Thompson completed the fencing, yard construction and painting within a week last December.

"We worked with Ken Ford. it was good to take them young fellas to work – fixing the fence and yard," Geoffrey Murphy said.

The holding yard includes a fenced-off area, a cattle crush, race and ramp that make it safer to work with big animals.

Mr Ford ordered all materials from national and international suppliers and they were freighted from Alice Springs.

The investment was made possible with \$70,000 of Davenport Ranges National Park rent money.



Traditional owners Mick and Geoffrey Murphy (centre) worked with project partner Ken Ford's team on the cattle yard.

# MORE POWER TO THE PEOPLE

THE LIGHTS can now be on at Urremerne well into the night, thanks to a new solar power project.

Every house on the homeland south of Alice Springs has electricity day and night for the first time. Residents used to turn off their diesel generators at night to save money, but now the fridges run all the time and there is air conditioning whenever needed, making life more comfortable for the families.

The Urremerne community development working group prioritised the project in early 2021, and contracted Photon Solar later that year.

The group planned the solar installation with the company to make sure that the design met the needs of the community and worked with the geography of their homeland.

They settled on three large solar panel arrays with fifty solar panels on the ground, batteries to store the power for use at night and back-up diesel generators for those rare cloudy days. The project was completed in 2022 and made an immediate difference.

Residents were able to stop using their noisy and expensive diesel generators so much and now spend the fuel savings on food and other essentials.

“Solar is good, a big improvement, because I used to have to use my pension, any money I got, on diesel. I had to save up for diesel. It costs 30 to 40 dollars for a jerry can of diesel,” working group member Marina Alice said.

“It was wasting my food. You’d switch the generator off at night and the meat would go bad, milk went rotten, and bread would go mouldy. Now I’m saving money on food and it’s better for health.

The generator was really noisy too. It’s quiet and peaceful now that there is solar.”

This year, the new solar arrays will be safely fenced off.

The \$450,000 cost is the biggest investment in solar power the

Urremerne community has made to their homeland. The matched funds trial of the Central Land Council and the National Indigenous Australians Agency meant that the working group was able to add almost \$145,000 from the Aboriginals Benefit Account to the project.

“Matched funds are a really good thing,” Theo Alice, another working group member, said.

“They should keep on doing that. If that didn’t happen we wouldn’t have all that things, like the solar system and even the split system air conditioner. People are really happy with the split system.

Matched funds will help us get more things for the outstation.”



Urremerne residents and family at the solar handover last December.

# YAPA AND WORLD VISION UNLOCK LITERACY

BILINGUAL education in Tanami schools is getting a boost through the Unlock Literacy Project.

World Vision Australia has partnered with the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) to bring the project to three Yapa communities.

Working with Warlpiri speakers and Yapa organisations in Willowra, Nyirrpri and Lajamanu, the project provides bilingual resources in the communities’ dialects.

World Vision sourced existing bilingual books and produced new ones with Willowra’s playgroup and the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation.

Among the new books is *Ngurra nyampuju Nyirrpri: This is Nyirrpri*, about a school bush camp, the *Wirliyajarrayi Bush Foods Book* and *Ngatijirri Jukurpa*, inspired by a budgerigar story and children’s photos of the birds taken during a bush trip near Lajamanu.

The project helps primary-school-aged children to become strong readers by teaching them the relationship between letters and sounds.

Learning activities combine Yapa culture with mainstream content so that children can grow strong both ways.

One of the WETT’s founding members, Fiona Gibson Napaljarri, from Nyirrpri, is a cultural advisor on the project.

“I talk to the people what it’s going to do and teach about it,” she said. “First, when it was brought out here into the community, to Nyirrpri, we liked it.”

Cultural advisors and community reference groups are adapting the design and implementation of the project to the needs of their communities to make learning more meaningful and fun.

**“Warlpiri and English in the school, and coming after doing more activities.”**

In Nyirrpri, that means after-school reading, writing and language activities such as the youth program and story time.

“That’s good, helping the kids. Warlpiri and English in the school, and coming after doing more activities,” Ms Gibson said.

The WETT funding has contributed to the project’s wages and vehicle costs since October 2022.



WETT advisory committee members Fiona Gibson, Alana Gibson and Agnes Brown taught Nyirrpri school kids on country.

# Multilingual app launched at native title holder camp

BIG RAINS and flood warnings may have forced Central Australia's largest gathering of native title holders to shift from the Ross River camp ground to the Yipirinya School in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), but they were never going to stop the PBC Camp.

More than 80 directors and members of prescribed bodies corporate, also known as PBCs, enjoyed the dry and warm surroundings of the school as they cut a cake to launch a new mobile phone app that speaks their languages.

"It will help you cut through the legalese."

The app provides access to resources to better understand how to manage PBCs and comply with the rules.

"PBCmob already speaks six of your languages and I hope it will speak more in time," Mr Turner said.

"It's simple and easy to use, with more pictures than words, but if you still need some help, just do what I do and ask a young person."

The app explains native title

**"Knowledge is power, and the app promises to return power where it belongs – with you."**

CLC chief executive Les Turner said the multilingual PBCmob app tackles the literacy and language barriers to explain the Native Title Act and access resources to understand the difference between the Land Rights Act and Native Title Act. The app helps PBC directors and members access information to manage their PBCs.

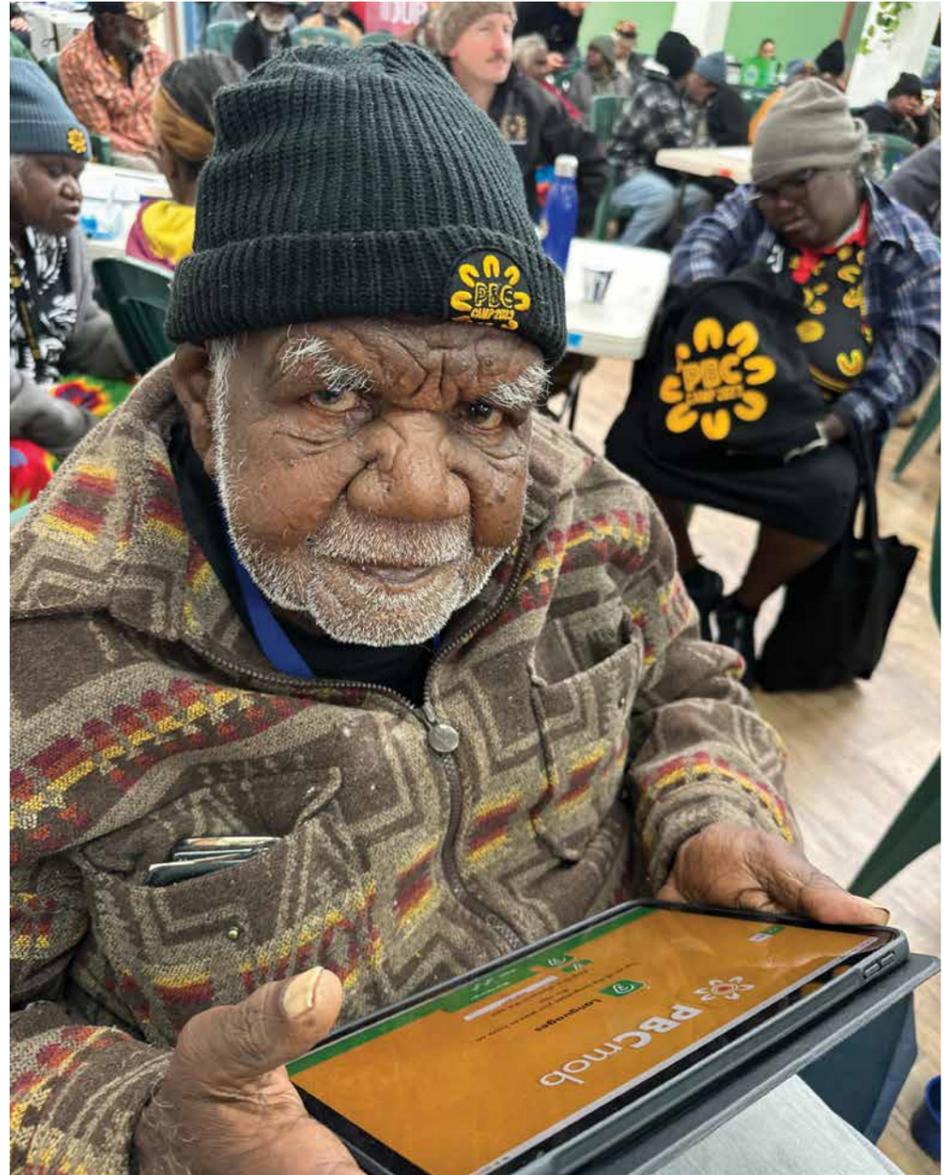
"Knowledge is power, and the app promises to return power where it belongs – with you," Mr Turner said.

concepts in Arrernte, Alyawarr, Kaytetye, Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri and Warumungu, and compares them with land rights.

"Native title rights and land rights are very different, yet people often confuse them," the CLC's manager of native title, Francine McCarthy, said. "PBCmob aims to clear up that confusion."



Francine McCarthy showed Amy Stafford and Amy Nelson how to use the PBCmob app.



Michael Jones used the PBCmob app in Warumungu.

"It will also be useful for all the agencies the native title corporations deal with, from the National Indigenous Australians Agency to Indigenous Business Australia."

The app was funded by the Aboriginals Benefit Account and is based on the CLC publication *Native Title Story*.

Ms McCarthy is working to add more languages to the app and make it available on PC and Mac computers.

The three-day PBC Camp is a biennial event aimed at strengthening the capacity of members and directors to run more than 30 native title holder corporations in the CLC region.

This year's program also included an information session and discussion about the voice to parliament.



PBC camp participants showed their support for a yes vote.



The CLC's voice team has been travelling across the Central Land Council region since March to inform people about the referendum and help them enrol to vote. They will keep going until voting finishes. Meetings with hundreds of residents of remote communities, like Willowra (see photo above and right), as well as homelands and towns are so far showing three things. People are being bombarded with lies and scare stories, they are hungry for the facts about the voice, and when they get them they strongly support a yes vote. To cut through the mountain of wrong information, community leaders are encouraging people to listen to organisations they trust. Also to remember the many elders who have passed, who fought for proper recognition for Aboriginal people, and for their voices to be heard.

# YES

Dawn Ross, Alice Springs

"I've always thought that we need a voice. Policies have been made about us forever and it's about time we look at our own policies and make decisions about our lives."



John Finlay, Tennant Creek

"It's important for Aboriginal people, for my people, to go into the constitution. We're going to vote yes for the voice."



PBC camp participants say yes to the voice to parliament.





YES  
OPEN YOUR HEART  
TO OUR VOICE

Tommy Conway, Kintore

"To our mob out bush and in the communities: we've all got to vote for the referendum. I will be voting yes, for the future of our mob, the Aboriginal people of this land."



Barbara Shaw, Alice Springs

"If we get this right we'll be able to stand up and tell the voice that we don't want guns in our communities, we want our roads to be fixed, we want new houses, we want our kids out of jail and on country, we want languages taught in our schools, we want more employment for our people. This is what the voice is all about."



Pat Anderson, Canberra

"When you involve people, you make better decisions and the money you spend goes where it's needed most: to the people on the ground."



Renata Morrison, Tennant Creek

"We hope to get a voice up there to speak for us and our people. It means a lot to me and my family. We're all going to vote yes to make changes for our children's future. We need things for youth to do, to keep them busy. People have ideas but nobody has been listening. The Stolen Generations and the Intervention were the biggest mistakes. We don't want to make the same mistakes."

YES



Rodney Katatuna, Titjikala

"Palya, mwerre, yes! The voice is important for our future, for the kids."

Conrad Rataru, Ntaria

"This is a good opportunity for us, we should all vote yes for the voice. Open your heart and say yes at voting time, because this is really important for Aboriginal people, for us to move forward and have more input with government policies and programs."



Graeme Smith, Alice Springs

"The voice just has to happen. Too many times have politicians spoken to us and gone back to Canberra and nothing has eventuated. That's why things need to change. We want constitutional recognition so no government of the day can strike a pen at midnight to get rid of what's been put in place. We all know what happens to legislative acts of parliament, they can be unwound overnight, such as ATSIC. The no campaign has no credible evidence or facts around why we should be voting no. A lot of what they are putting forward, 'pay the rent' and stuff, that's not what we're after. Smells like a native title debate. When that first came in people were scared they were going to lose their back yards. There's a lot of scare tactics which again will proved to be unfounded."



Shirleen Campbell, Alice Springs

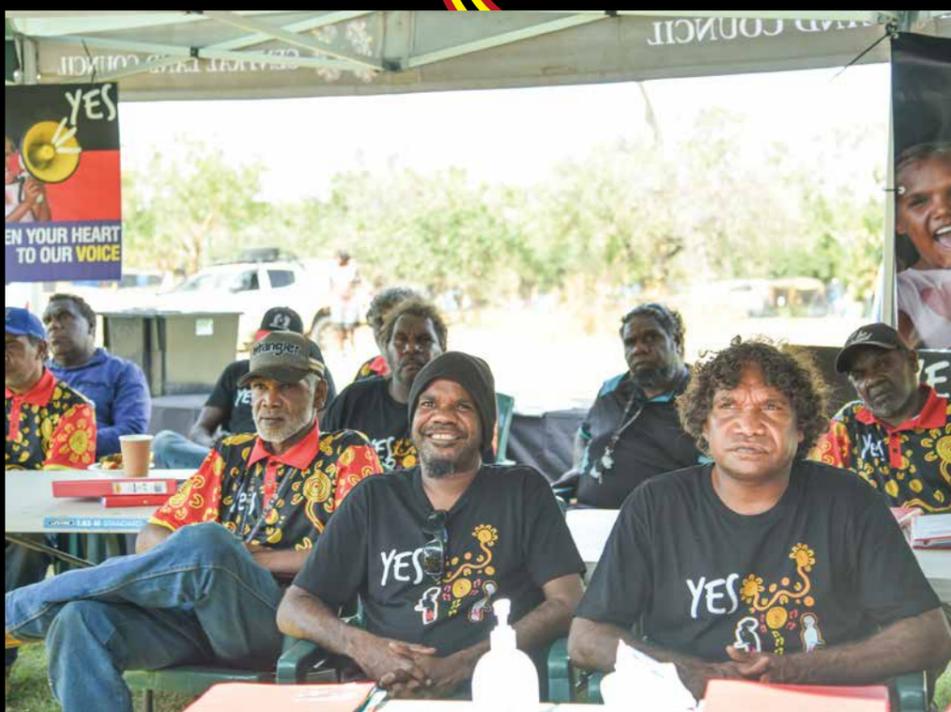
"The voice to parliament gives us an opportunity to voice our concerns about the issues in our communities, like not enough housing. Each town and community has different ideas and solutions, and the voices on the ground - the leaders, traditional owners, and the different language groups, and our young ones as well. We are the experienced people. We have stories and songs and knowledge to share. It's about listening to those mob who live in the bush. They're the ones doing the hard yards. They're the ones who have the strong voices, but no-one is listening to them. I support the voice and the communities because they need to be heard and listened to."



CLC delegates John Lewis and Eldon Ross with a visitor at the joint land council meeting at Barunga.



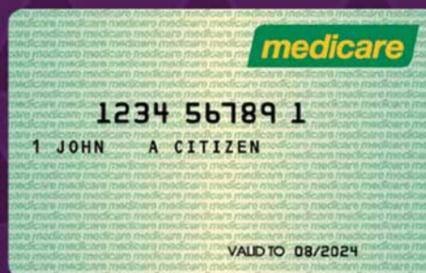
Patrick Collins, Roderick Kantamara and Arnold Butler are proud supporters of the voice.



Terence Abbott, Byron Ratara, Christian Malbunka at the Barunga council meeting.



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Authorised by the Australian Electoral Commission, Canberra

Patrick Dodson, Broome

"When people on the ground are listened to and engaged, better laws and policies are made. Advice from the voice will make our decisions and directions more informed and more successful. Recognition in the constitution will help heal our nation."



Peter Corbett, Alekareng

"We need to say yes. Strong yes!"



Jimmy Frank, Tennant Creek

"We don't really have control in our communities. We need something more permanent, having a say in the parliament – whether it's housing, whether it's justice or health. ATSIC was a strong voice for us. It has been taken away from us. The constitution is like the Bible. It's very hard to take out what's in the constitution. Getting our voice into the constitution is getting our foot in the door. It's a first step, but a huge step.

It's really important for us, especially in the Northern Territory. Our ancestors fought for our country, they built a foundation for us. We should vote yes because we've got nothing to lose."



# Kularda and pikirri pass from father to son – 91 years later

YUENDUMU resident Simon Japangardi Fisher Senior has found his father's kularda (spears) and pikirri (spear thrower) in the South Australian Museum.

"I had tears in my eyes," Mr Fisher said of the moment he finally held the inscribed weapon in his hands.

"It's been there for 91 years. When you look at it you can feel its spirit."

He pictured his father as a young man, hunting and living off the land in the 1930s.

That's when he took anthropologist and natural scientist Norman Tindal to Mount Liebig and other places, stopping to drink at the Pikilyi and Yunmarji springs.

"In his diary he called [my father] Marla Jukurpa. He took blood and hair samples of him. Whitefella experiment. You feel sad sometimes."

Tindal also took his weapons and gave them to the museum in 1932.

The museum's Warlpiri repatriation officer Jamie Hampton helped with the search.

"It's an amazing story. It took me 22 years to finally find them. It's been too long," Mr Fisher said.

Mr Fisher is a member of the Warlpiri Project, which plans to build a cultural centre in Yuendumu.

He would like the completed centre to house his father's collection, so the young people can learn about their history first hand.

"We'll bring it all back. It will be a three-year project."

The Warlpiri Project has enabled 61 men and women from Yuendumu and Lajamanu to undertake nine research trips in the past four years.

The Yuendumu committee of the Granites Mine Affected Areas Aboriginal Corporation (GMAAAC) has been a major supporter of the project, along with Newmont,

the South Australian Museum, Warlukurlangu Arts and Pintupi Anmatyerr Warlpiri (PAW) Media.

The GMAAAC used the community's mining compensation money to fund the Adelaide trip of a group of project participants earlier this year.

They are researchers too," he said, proud to pass on his labour of love.

"I'm the first one out of my family to conduct my own research. I did all that anthropology work. I did my family genealogy too."

His research has already taken Mr

**"I'm the first one out of my family to conduct my own research. I did all that anthropology work. I did my family genealogy too."**

While the men visited the State Library and the University of Adelaide, Mr Fisher found another link with his past – a photo of himself as a five-year-old.

"My sons wanted a photo of me.

Fisher to Portugal, a trip to Germany and Denmark is on the cards next year and he doesn't plan to stop any time soon.

"We're off to New Zealand this year," he said.



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Simon Japangardi Fisher Senior with his father's kularda (spears).

Kym Brahim, Tennant Creek

"It's important to vote for the voice because it will give this country an opportunity to move forward together as a nation and recognising the first nations of this country."



Marlene Abbott, Kaltukatjara

"The voice is the main one for people, to talk strongly for community and our kids, for the future. We don't want to go backwards. I want people to vote yes."



# Vietnam vets reunite for the voice

TWO ELDERLY Vietnam vets embrace in an Alice Springs backyard, squinting in the bright midday sunshine, blinking away their tears.

Geoff Shaw (78), a Kaytetye elder from Mount Nancy town camp and retired Queensland housing manager Malcolm Spencer (79) haven't clapped eyes on each other since they fought side-by-side in the jungle around Nui Dat, more than half a century ago.

Spencer has just driven for four days from Toogoolawah, an hour northwest of Brisbane, to find the mate he knew as 'Tubby' Shaw "still sucking oxygen".

He hands him a framed black-and-white photo.

It shows two mud-splattered, bare-chested grunts in their early 20s, grinning broadly at each other.

"Two diggers. We're exactly the same. When you're out there fighting there's no colour. You wear green, right? You bleed red."

That's not all the two old soldiers have in common.

Their emotional reunion is a remarkable tale about the power of the voice to unite Australians even before a single vote has been cast in the referendum.

Fifty-seven years after Shaw met Spencer on one of his two tours of duty he is fighting what may well be his last campaign.

A week before their reunion Shaw sits near a camp fire in a dry creek bed, not far from the Todd River bank where he was born.

He is on the phone to the Sunday Telegraph's James Campbell.

He tells Campbell he wants Anthony Albanese to hold his nerve and get on with the voice referendum.

"Most of the Aboriginal society are behind the Prime Minister and he should push it through as soon as possible," he urges.

"Aboriginal people are sick and tired of waiting. They want it to move forward."

The way Shaw sees it, it's a battle for self-determination, for a once-in-a-generation chance to be heard before governments make laws and policies about "people's health and education and so on".

Half a country away, Spencer spots Shaw's photo in the Sunday Mail.

A quote near the end of the accompanying article catches his eye: "I'd like all the Vietnam veterans to follow my lead and vote for Yes."

Now Spencer, already firmly in the

Yes camp, is on a mission. "The Yes vote is very, very important," he says. "It's all about mateship. Something's got to happen. We've got to stop the bullshit. We've got to get together for Australia."

He phones his local member of parliament, who knows the member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour, who puts him in touch with Shaw's family.

Then he jumps in his car and heads west, arriving a few weeks sooner than expected.

"I don't muck about. If I say I'm going to do something I just do it," he says.

Geoff Shaw still can't quite believe that the voice referendum has brought them together.

"Fifty years later he reads that article and finds out that I'm still alive. It's making the hairs on my arm all stand up."

Spencer talks about his work for the disbanded Community Development Employment Program across the Top End.

**"There's too much negativity in this world, and we need to sit down together and have a negotiation."**

His years of training Aboriginal people in carpentry and housing maintenance and listening to their stories have opened his heart to the Uluru Statement's call for voice, treaty and truth-telling.

"All the atrocities that they have gone through. I think it's wrong. When I see injustice I try to change it," he explains.

He recalls walking into a Brisbane pub with Shaw in 1966, just before they were shipped off to the war.

They were with a group of Assault Pioneers, all sporting their uniforms.

"The barman said 'you can have



Malcolm Spencer and Geoff Shaw with a photo of them in Vietnam.

a beer', but he pointed at Geoff and said 'he can't have a beer'," Spencer says.

In those days Aboriginal people were allowed to die for their country, but not to drink.

"We said 'well, if he can't have a beer we can't have one either'. So we went somewhere where we could have a beer."

That spirit of sticking up for your mate is what we need today, according to Spencer.

"It took 'em a fair while to wake up and it's the same today. They are putting a vote to the people asking 'should the Aboriginal people have a say about how the country is run?' Of course they should!"

"A lot of people have this misconception that they've got to lose something, that it's going to cost them if this gets voted in, which is absolute rubbish."

"There's too much negativity in this world, and we need to sit down together and have a negotiation," he says.

Spencer admits he would feel bitterly disappointed if his country voted No. His message for his fellow Australians is simple.

"Don't be scared. Have another think about it. Get off your arse and get behind it. Vote Yes and let the politicians sort out the detail."

YES



Any questions about CLC business? Call your region's office

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	<b>2. SOUTH WEST</b> Wayne Clarke 8951 0577
	<b>6. TENNANT CREEK</b> Darryl "Tiger" Fitz 8962 2343
	<b>7. EASTERN SANDOVER</b> Edward Foster 8951 0606
	<b>4. TANAMI</b> Lazarus Gallagher 8951 0581
	<b>8. EASTERN PLENTY</b> Richard Dodd 8951 0622
	<b>5. WEST</b> Amos Egan 8951 0581
	<b>9. CENTRAL</b> Michael Turner 8951 6250

Alison Anderson, Cairns

"Having a voice to parliament gives us power. Not like in the old days, when white politicians made decisions for Aboriginal people and for our families. When we get constitutional recognition it will be us telling the government and we will have a direct way to influence decisions on housing, clinics, roads, shops and kids' programs. If there are bad things happening in our communities we can tell the national body about what isn't working."

It's our job to inform ourselves, inform our children and talk with our friends and families. Talk to our kids, all our nieces and nephews to enrol to vote. And it's up to us to talk to our white friends. In this struggle for the voice the black cockatoo must work with the white cockatoo because it's the white cockatoo that will get us the yes vote. They're 97 per cent of the population. We've got to get the black cockatoo - cree cree! - to talk with the white cockatoo, our brothers and sisters."



YES

Warren Williams, Yuendumu

"We have many good men and women who are trying hard to make our communities better places, who are desperate to be heard. The voice comes from the people. It's a big opportunity for us. It opens everything up for us. We're going to grab this opportunity. There's a lot of people who think the same thing. We want to go ahead with it. We will probably never have that chance again."



Desley Rogers, Mistake Creek

"The voice, to me, is recognising us as Aboriginal people, as humans, and our ways, our law. If it goes into the constitution it'll be good for us."



Colleen Mack, Alice Springs

"I've been sitting on the fence. My main concern was how would the voice get to the parliament from the community? I don't want nobody to be talking in Canberra about us here and we don't know them. [The information I have received] has quelled that fear and made me understand how they'd go about this. I'll probably vote yes."



Yanyi Baker, Ernabella

"Listen up, give us back our voice."



Kristy Bloomfield, Alice Springs

"I'm voting yes for me and my family and the next generation, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."



Eddie Betts, Melbourne

"The voice won't fix everything overnight, but I feel like it's the opening of a pathway to make sure we are included and respected in decision-making on issues that impact us."



Evonne Goolagong Cawley, Noosa Heads

"Voting yes is a chance for all Australians to celebrate the contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made to our country and to help the next generation chase their dreams. Let's grab this moment with both hands." Photo Daniel Pockett, via Getty Images



Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands), Simpsons Gap

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# Female duo leads new NT Aboriginal Investment Corporation



Barbara Shaw has been elected the first chair of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation.

CENTRAL Land Council executive member and former deputy chair Barbara Shaw has been elected the first chair of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation.

Her appointment brings the new body taking over from the federal government-managed Aboriginal Benefit Account (ABA) under all-female leadership.

Ms Shaw wasted no time introducing herself and the NTAIC's acting chief executive Leeanne Caton to the joint meeting of Northern Territory land councils at Barunga in June.

The women told the meeting that the NTAIC is replacing the ABA grants program with its own process to deliver up to \$60 million a year in funding to NT Aboriginal corporations.

Grants can be used for projects supporting culture, country, communities and business.

Ms Shaw will oversee the development of the grants process by the NTAIC board, which has a

majority of representatives from the four NT land councils.

CLC chief executive Les Turner was among the first to congratulate her on her appointment.

"Ms Shaw is the right woman to lead the organisation that will bring the Aboriginals Benefit Account under the control of Aboriginal Territorians at last," he said.

**"She is a passionate advocate for our people and has a track record as a long-term member of the old ABA advisory committee."**

"She is a passionate advocate for our people and has a track record as a long-term member of the old ABA advisory committee and as interim co-chair of the new corporation since 2022.

She has long campaigned for the ABA to be controlled by the people

whose land generates its income, and not by a federal minister."

Ms Shaw, a campaigner for the voice to parliament and youth worker from the Mount Nancy town camp in Alice Springs, took part in all the joint NT land council meetings over the past seven years that led to the establishment of the new corporation.

Earlier this year, CLC delegates elected Dianne Stokes, from the Mangalawarra outstation, and Jimmy Frank, from Tennant Creek, to join the corporation's grants committee.

The land councils have fought for more than 30 years to bring the

\$1.4 billion ABA under Aboriginal control.

"With the last federal government-run ABA grants round now closed, the end of this long journey towards self-determination is in sight," Mr Turner said.



Leeanne Caton at Barunga.

## Redress Scheme Support Services

We can support you to learn more about Redress, listen to your story and help you submit an application.

You can apply for Redress if:

- You were a child when sexual abuse happened.
- The abuse happened before 2018.
- You met the person who abused you at an institution.

Your story will be safe and believed with no judgement



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# Rangers travel from far and wide for ranger camp



The team building workshop at ranger camp was a great success.

LONG DISTANCES, bumpy roads and floods were never going to get in the way of the more than 140 rangers who travelled across country to attend the Central Land Council ranger camp.

The Murnkurrumurnkurru Rangers from Daguragu and Kalkaringi did not let the floods in

their region stop them from attending the camp. They made the journey from Darwin to Ross River, so that they could join fellow rangers to learn new skills and swap experiences.

They looked forward to 15<sup>th</sup> annual ranger camp in March like never before, having missed out when COVID cancelled the 2022 event.

This year's camp kicked off with a discussion about the voice to parliament referendum. The CLC's

Josie Douglas, Luritja leader Alison Anderson and Jade Ritchie from Yes23 explained what a yes vote would mean to rangers and their communities. They said the voice could make a real difference by, for example, speaking up for better land management and ranger programs.

The camp is not just about learning new work skills. Rangers also love sharing stories with their colleagues. Two dozen rangers can now keep

telling their stories even after the camp, thanks to the addition of a smart phone video workshop.

One of three new training activities at the camp, the workshop attracted 24 rangers who learned how to shoot and cut videos using nothing but their phones or tablets.

"Taking videos and editing them on my phone will help me tell the story of our ranger work and get more rangers to join us," Warlpiri Ranger Shane White said.

His colleague Shaun Brown also did the smart phone video workshop. He liked the addition of new workshops as well as the compulsory training courses that are always on offer.

Among the new activities were resilience training and a workshop on leadership and team building.

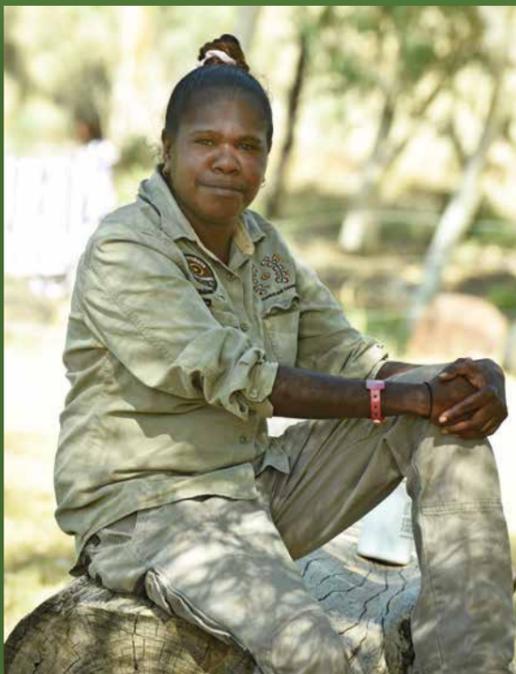
"I also did the fire and incendiary machine training workshop as it was good to get a refresher on using the equipment," Mr Brown said.

There were workshops ranging from first aid to four-wheel-drive, skid steer (bobcat) and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) driving. Animal tracking and the ever popular snake handling were also on offer.

A survey of rangers after the camp found that they valued the opportunity to connect with other rangers most of all. The camp also strengthens connections between training organisations and rangers.

"Attending the camp gave our team a unique opportunity to develop relationships with the CLC rangers," Batchelor Institute lecturer Sam Hussey said.

## MEET OUR RANGERS



### Helma Bernard

#### Why did you want to become a ranger?

My uncle George Sambo was one of the first Gurindji Rangers and listening to his stories made me want to become a ranger. He taught me and some new rangers about our country, old stories, the old massacre sites and the local rock art places like the sword fish painting.

#### What projects have you worked on?

Fencing off springs and taking school kids out bush teaching them traditional way, with traditional owners and elders. We taught them things to know and tell them what we are going to do in the future, so kids can pass it on too. We have grave sites at our homestead up there and we keep them clean. We put rocks over the graves to keep them clean.

#### What strengths do you bring to your group?

It is good when you are out there with your heart. We have land there and we need to go out there and sit with families, and traditional owners pass on stories. Without elders we wouldn't have that. We need to do this because we don't have many traditional owners left who can talk to future generations. We are five in our ranger team, three men and two women. If you want to be a team leader you need to have the brains to know what's right or wrong. Without team leaders we have no team. I am learning to be a better leader and am doing a team building course at ranger camp.

#### What do you do in your free-time?

I like going out fishing and hunting with family, being out bush. And sitting with old people, cutting clap sticks and painting. Listening to old people and what they say.

#### What would you tell the Prime Minister about rangers if you got the chance?

I would let him know that we need more women rangers and more new skills and more equipment. Because back home we just had floods. In the floods at Kalkaringi and Daguragu our office was flooded, we lost a lot of our pictures and most of our work equipment and tools were badly damaged. The office was really bad so we had to move to another CLC office in Kalkaringi.





The Batchelor Institute held mapping and digital recording workshops and awarded 25 rangers certificates in conservation and ecosystem management.

# The camp is not just about learning new work skills. Rangers also love sharing stories with their colleagues.

Each camp celebrates the employment milestones of experienced rangers and the skills, stability and leadership they bring to the program. This year the CLC welcomed five rangers into the '10+ year club'.

CLC ranger teams travelled from 14 communities across Central Australia and were joined by rangers from seven other organisations, including from the Ngaanyatjarra lands in Western Australia.



More than 140 rangers from across Central Australia were attending ranger camp in March this year.



Rangers learned how to identify and handle venomous snakes.



Welcome to the 10+ year club, Ryan Raggett, Charles Lechleitner, Jeffrey Foster and Preston Kelly.



# Sharing Kaytetye through emojis



KAYTETYE-SPEAKING communities are sharing their endangered language and culture online, through a free emoji app.

The Arnnke app features 112 emojis representing life, culture and environment on Kaytetye country that can be texted and shared online.

“We want to keep our language strong. It’s a little language spoken around Barrow Creek,” senior Kaytetye speaker Phillip Janima said.

**“Indigemoji is not only about creating a fun set of emojis, it’s about language maintenance.”**

Kaytetye is spoken around 300 kilometres north of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), by only around 100 speakers.

Mr Janima and other senior Kaytetye speakers, such as Tommy Jangala Walkabout, Valentine Shaw and Kathleen Rambler, came up with and oversaw the emoji designs during workshops with artists and graphic designers.

“We made the Artnke app to help

kids learn Kaytetye, and other people that might want to learn,” Mr Janima said.



“We chose the picture of Artnke, the ‘flat topped hill’, because that’s where we Kaytetye people are from, and our language.

My sister did the picture for Artnke and others pictures. Artnke represents Kaytetye people, language and country.”

Around 60 people gathered at Barrow Creek Roadhouse in April to launch the app with games, a BBQ and Kaytetye songs.

It is the second language app released by the Indigemoji collective.

“The Indigemoji team wanted to support Kaytetye as we knew Kaytetye deserved some attention and resources,” the collective’s Joel Liddle said.

“Indigemoji is not only about creating a fun set of emojis, it’s about language maintenance and attracting new learners from our communities, people who haven’t grown up with language.

The academic literature clearly demonstrates where indigenous people re-engage in language learning, it strengthens their identity, health and wellbeing as a result.



Petrina Thompson loves the Kaytetye emojis.

The Kaytetye folks have not only made a great set of emojis to safeguard their language, they’ve also made a contribution to the health and wellbeing of their community into the future.”

Programmer Matthew Heffernan hopes the app also inspires young people to learn digital skills and make their own apps and platforms relevant to their culture and language.

“As a Luritja software developer who

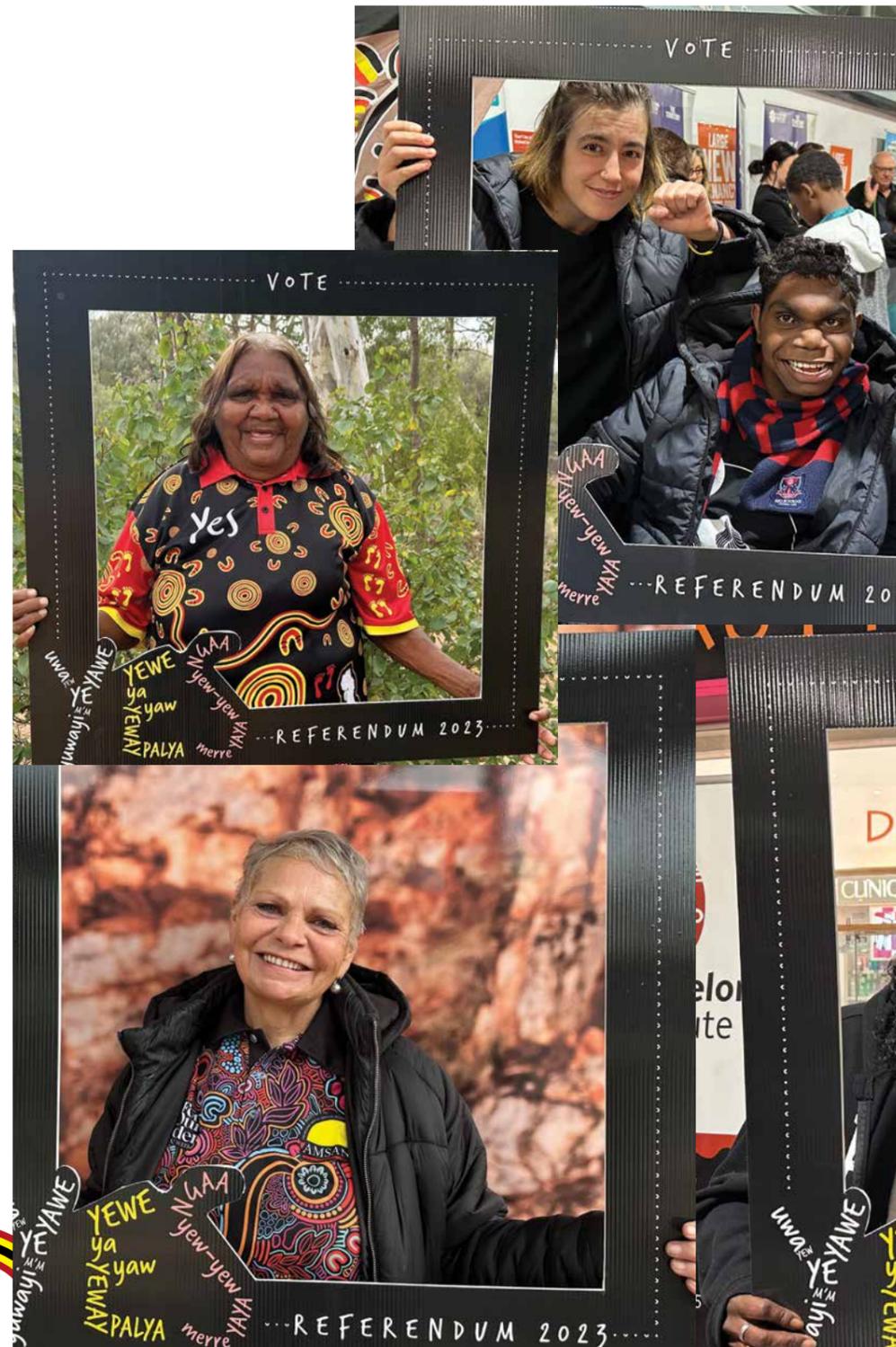
grew up between Papunya and Alice Springs, I am thrilled to have worked on an app,” he said.

“It is a privilege for me to show my mob from there that we can absolutely be software engineers and computer scientists,” he said.

The free app is available at the App Store, Google Play and Indigemoji.com.au.



“We made the Artnke app to help kids learn Kaytetye, and other people that might want to learn,” Phillip Janima said.



# YES



Barbara Shaw, Tennant Creek

“Vote ‘yes’ for the voice. It’s a great opportunity to influence policy change, for people in the bush to actually have a real voice. We really need to be at the table and it’s time to push for it. This is the start to what our ultimate goal is – to negotiate a treaty. It’s a window that is open and we should not let this opportunity go. This time won’t come around again.”

# YES



# Amoonguna leader Lynette Pengarte Ellis has left a big legacy

LYNETTE ‘CHOOKY’ ELLIS was renowned for her generosity and deep commitment to her beloved community of Amoonguna. Ms Ellis was born in 1970, to parents of Eastern Arrernte and Warlpiri descent, a native title holder of the Antulye estate group, and a traditional owner of the Yeperenye Nature Park and Amoonguna. Her community is mourning her passing late last year, aged only 52.

Ms Ellis grew up at Amoonguna back camp, the eldest of seven children. Her first job was to look after the family’s chickens, earning her the nickname Chooky. After visiting the local primary school she graduated from the Yirara College.

She had three children with husband Bernard Kernan – Stephen, Rekisha and Norman – and grew up many more children in her extended family. Sheena Hayes, Rolland Davis, Ginger Green, Maverick Green, Anastasia Morris, Sacara Wallace, Maureen Ellis, Luke Wallace, Fiona Williams, Louise Williams, Shania Wallace and Jamahl Scrutton were all proud to call her mum.

Larger-than-life, Ms Ellis had a talent for bringing people together. She organised community parties with the MacDonnell Regional Council at the recreation hall and the basketball court that featured local bands and great music, and kept going into the early hours. Everyone was welcome. Her legacy of being fair, inclusive and supportive of others will live on.

She worked closely for more than a decade with the Central Land Council’s community development team and was a strong advocate of the program. She was one of the steering

committee members of the Yeperenye Trail project which saw more than 30 local Aboriginal men and women construct a walking and cycling trail between Anthwerrke (Emily Gap) and Atherrke (Jessie Gap) in 2020.

“Lynette worked hard to make sure the project was guided by the traditional owners and provided training and employment for her community,” said CLC chief executive Les Turner, who launched the trail with Ms Ellis.

**“She led by example, worked very hard, knew how to achieve results and had a cheeky laugh. Her contribution to community can never be underestimated. Her legacy will be remembered fondly. We will miss her forever.”**

“She took a lead role in our community development meetings, built productive relationships with government agencies and promoted the project to local and national audiences.”

At the event she told the ABC what the project meant to her. “Makes me feel really proud that we did that, putting our community money back into the trail here,” she said.

As a long-term member of the Amoonguna health board of the Central Australian Aboriginal

Congress, Ms Ellis guided the delivery of health and wellbeing services in the community, and her influence will continue well into the future.

She represented her community on the MacDonnell Regional Council since 2017 and was also on the council’s local authority since 2010. “Councillor Ellis was more than a woman of substance,” said council president Roxanne Kenny. “She led by example, worked very hard, knew how to achieve results and had a cheeky laugh. Her contribution to community can never be underestimated. My heart and deepest sympathies go to the Ellis family and we cannot thank her enough for all her hard work and contributions. Councillor Ellis had gone beyond the call of duty to her community, and her legacy will be remembered fondly. We will miss her forever.”

Long before she became a director of Indigenous Community Television she was one of the organisation’s biggest supporters. “Ms Ellis was a key figure on a number of ICTV productions based in Amoonguna, but also played a large part in developing Amoonguna as a location for film productions in Central Australia,” ICTV’s general manager Laurie May said.

She worked as casting agent and cultural advisor on the ABC’s *True Colours* television series which was filmed in Amoonguna in 2021. “She was a one-stop location and talent scout, often connecting productions with local community members and encouraging them to work on them. Most importantly, she took pride in her involvement in these and any film or TV show that took place in Mparntwe and would often want to

watch them over and over again,” said Ms May.

“It has been a privilege to work alongside Ms Ellis. Her absence will be deeply felt across family, friends and the many organisations she played such a large part in. She will be greatly missed by all of us at ICTV.”

The arts were close to Ms Ellis’ heart. She was part of the original reference group for the Parrtjima Festival and instrumental in Parrtjima’s first installation – drawings by Amoonguna school kids that were featured on inflatable light sculptures of Yipirinya caterpillars. Ms Ellis and her family also painted the design for the Yipirinya sculptures in the Todd Mall which is based on their stories.

**Larger-than-life, Ms Ellis had a talent for bringing people together.**

Her large family remembers her as an extremely loving and kind mother and grandmother. “She was very hard-working, she looked after all of us; her own three kids and then me and my brother,” her daughter Sheena Ellis said. “She would make sure we all had breakfast and showered and then sent us off to school and she’d go to work. That’s when she worked as a teacher’s assistant in Alekarenge.”

Anyone who met her will remember her ability to show love and care to all her family; grandkids, brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, nieces, nephews, sons, daughters and cousins.



Ms Ellis was part of the original reference group for the Parrtjima Festival. Photo by James Horan.



# A Western Desert Boss: Irene Nangala 1959 – 2023

IRENE WILPINTA NANGALA was a proud Pintupi Luritja woman from Walungurru (Kintore). Her passing is a devastating loss for her family and friends across Central Australia and for many across the nation who had the privilege of knowing her.

Nangala is remembered as a senior community leader and fierce advocate for the health and development of our desert communities. Over the decades she had extensive involvement in education, was an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) regional councillor, a Central Land Council delegate, and the chair of the Kintore Community Council.

Nangala's most significant legacy is her extraordinary leadership and tireless work on behalf of the Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation (Waltja) and the Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation (Purple House). She was a founding member of both organisations, holding their most senior governance roles as executive director and chair respectively. Nangala lived these roles. She was not to be trifled with when it came to looking after the people she felt responsible for. She was generous with her care, relentless with her advocacy, and passionate about teaching and advising. Generations will benefit from Nangala's knowledge and work, and remote communities across the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia have their elders home on country because of her.

Nangala was born in Papunya in 1959 and passed away in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) this year, leaving family across many communities in Central Australia. After starting dialysis in 2013 she spent her last decade between Mparntwe and Walungurru but was always happiest when home with family. It is fitting that the names of the organisations she led mean 'family' and 'keeping all our families well'. Her commitment to looking after families was remarkable. She made sure that younger generations stay connected to language and culture. "They've got to be with the young people, to tell them the truths so they can think and listen to the old people. Teaching them stories about culture," she said.

Nangala was all about community-led solutions as the way forward, and she was celebrated for the successful



Photo supplied by Purple House.

models of self-determination that she helped to build. At Waltja she led a board of directors made up entirely of Aboriginal women who are passionate about supporting families, and building and promoting the capacity of Central Australian communities.

**"They've got to be with the young people, to tell them the truths so they can think and listen to the old people. Teaching them stories about culture."**

At the Purple House she was a driving force behind the extraordinary growth of the community-controlled health service which gets dialysis patients home on country. Nangala was part of the art auction in 2000 which raised the funds to start the Purple House, not knowing that she herself would be a patient some 13 years later. Viewing other communities as part of

her bigger family, she and the other directors felt a profound responsibility for sharing expertise and resources. Their generosity has changed the lives of hundreds of dialysis patients, their families and communities across the Western Desert and well beyond.

In Mparntwe she would regularly be found holding court at Waltja or the Purple House. She kept an eye on everything and ensured the right people were in the right place at the right time, working the right way. The staff and patients at Purple House miss Nangala's broad smile and the twinkle in her eye as she welcomed all who crossed her path, and the way you never quite knew where her busy schedule would take her next.

For many, the health challenges she had would have been enough. For Nangala it only spurred her on to work harder to teach, care and advocate for family, community and her organisations. In addition to her leadership roles, she contributed to the National Indigenous Transplantation Task Force. She also supported many

language and culture projects which improve access to information on health and well-being, helping her people to navigate two worlds and ways of working.

Nangala loved her work on the *Wangka Kutju* (one language) Pintupi-English translation app with the Purple House language group. Thanks to the app her voice will stay with us. She was also a passionate supporter of the voice to parliament and regularly wore her 'Yes' shirt. Nangala's work is an exemplar of strong Aboriginal leadership and the power of community-led transformation.

"Nangala was a powerhouse. She lived life to the fullest. Her legacy is profound, and we cannot truly express what her loss means and how much we loved her. Our condolences are with family and all who knew her."

By the Purple House team

Jessica Mauboy, Darwin

**"Constitutional recognition is a powerful symbol for indigenous people. I can see from my own experiences what achieving that recognition would mean. There is still so much inequality when it comes to our communities, especially in remote places. It's about putting a line in the sand on what has happened before and giving us a way to go forward together."** Photo Hanna Lassen, via Getty Images



Lynette Ross, Alice Springs

**"It's time our voices were heard. It's time we had control over the decisions that affect us. So vote yes."**



Pat Brahim, Tennant Creek

**"It will create an environment where people have choice. And if you get the voice into the constitution then no-one can change that. This is important for us, not for us oldies but the young people. It's their futures that we've got to make change for. Vote yes!"**



This issue of *Land Rights News* is authorised by Lesley Turner, Central Land Council, 27 Stuart Highway, Alice Springs

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