



## Native title holders to decide next steps following Singleton water licence appeal decision

The Central Land Council acknowledges the Northern Territory Court of Appeals' decision today to dismiss native title holders' appeal against the massive Singleton Station water licence.

"We will consider the reasons behind the judgment once they are released, explain them to the native title holders and remote communities affected by the controversial water licence and seek their instructions," CLC chief executive Les Turner said.

"They have said many times that they will never stop fighting against the licence that threatens their sacred sites and their communities' water security, so we'll consider all avenues open to them now."

The failed appeal comes more than three years after the native title holders' Mpwerempwer [pronounced emPUrra-empurra] Aboriginal Corporation asked the NT Supreme Court to set aside an NT government decision to grant a licence to extract up to 40 gigalitres per year to irrigate an export-oriented horticulture farm in the desert.

The licence represents the largest amount of groundwater the NT has ever given away – free of charge.

In February 2024 Mpwerempwer appealed the Supreme Court decision to reject its legal challenge against the government's decision to grant the licence. The CLC assisted Mpwerempwer to bring the appeal.

Two years earlier Mpwerempwer and the Arid Lands Environment Centre took legal action against then NT Families Minister Kate Worden's decision to grant Fortune Agribusiness the 30-year groundwater extraction licence for Singleton Station.

Mpwerempwer argued that the licence was invalid because the minister didn't comply with the NT Water Act, failed to consider Aboriginal cultural values and other important matters.

"Our constituents are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change on their groundwater and their survival on their country depends on robust and transparent water planning more than ever," Mr Turner said.

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