



Withhold federal funds until NT sets up independent body to investigate police misconduct

The Central Land Council has called on the federal government to withhold funding from the Northern Territory government until it sets up an independent police conduct commission and adequately resources an independent inquiry led by the NT Coroner, to be concluded within 12 months.

“Unlike most jurisdictions, the NT lacks a body to investigate police misconduct and has failed to overhaul the culture of its police force,” CLC chair Warren Williams said.

The CLC chair, whose nephew Kumanjayi White died in police custody during Reconciliation Week, said the measures must target officers with a history of complaints and racist attitudes.

Mr Williams said the lack of an independent oversight over the police magnifies the desolation and sorrow gripping his community.

“I thank Minister McCarthy for her support of an independent inquiry. She understands my community needs confidence in the police and that trust has been eroded,” he said.

“My heart goes out to my community and all the good people who gathered in sorrow and solidarity at vigils in Alice Springs and Sydney.

“But let me be clear: only money will force the NT government to act. Our lives are worth less than a chocolate bar to those in power and money is the only language they understand.”

In the meantime, he said, an independent inquiry into his nephew’s death has to be held without delay.

“I hope the minister supports our request and ensures the coroner is well-resourced so they can conclude their inquest within a year,” he said.

The Country Liberal Party government has been in office for less than a year and has already broken multiple promises to Aboriginal communities, while the CLC remains incredibly concerned with the rates of incarceration and child removals.

“We don’t trust this government and its police force to keep us safe,” Mr Williams said.

“NT police talk of reform and anti-racism strategies is just that - talk. It’s time for the federal government to hold the NT accountable and force the change we so desperately need.”

Mr Williams is attending sorry business in Yuendumu and unavailable for interviews.

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