



Kimberley Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

26 February 2016

KLC calls on Prime Minister to lead mature conversation around Indigenous issues

Following ‘noble savage’ comments from a Federal Member of Parliament, the Kimberley Land Council has asked Prime Minister Turnbull to encourage his party’s Members to engage in a mature conversation around Indigenous issues.

KLC Chairman Anthony Watson reacted with frustration and disappointment over recent comments made by Federal Liberal MP Dennis Jensen, in which he re-opened divisive and unhelpful comments about the ‘lifestyle choices’ of remote Aboriginal people, invoking the image of the ‘noble savage’.

“We are appalled that any Member of Parliament in the 21st century should hold the misplaced and uninformed views expressed by Mr Jensen, said Anthony Watson.

“We have to constantly fight against the negative images of Aboriginal people that some choose to promote in order to pursue their own agendas, he said.

“Mr Jensen’s use of the term ‘noble savage’ is deeply offensive, and shows that he knows little about the so called lifestyle choices of remote Indigenous people.

Indigenous people identify as part of modern Australia, and expect the same rights, the same supports, the same opportunities, and the same responsibilities as all Australians.

“People want to live on their country, where they were born, and where their ancestors came from. It is their home, said Mr Watson.

“Far from being a lifestyle choice, let alone a choice to live as a ‘noble savage’, its about retaining connections to country and to the past – something earlier colonisers, and now Mr Jensen, seem determined to belittle and dismiss.”

It is this dispossession and relocation that has lead directly to the issues facing Indigenous Australians today.

“I’m heartened that most politicians, and most Australians, understand that the problems Indigenous people face in their daily lives need very specific and targeted solutions, and that Aboriginal people must be at the heart of those solutions, said Mr Watson.

“So today I have written to Prime Minister Turnbull, about his Government’s commitment to the many positive initiatives improving the lives of our people, including the Empowered Communities program.

“But I’ve also had to ask the Prime Minister to lead members of his party, including Mr Jensen, in a mature conversation about Indigenous issues, said Mr Watson

“We want a conversation that takes us forward, not one that takes us back to the simplistic, outdated, and just plain wrong myths from the past.

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