



JOINT STATEMENT ALLIANCE OF WA ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS

Alliance of WA Land Councils insists on Aboriginal say in community closures, changes to Aboriginal Heritage Act

Aboriginal people must have a real say in decisions that effect their lives and well-being, say members of the Alliance of WA Land Councils (Alliance).

Following a two-day Alliance meeting in Broome, representatives from Land Councils around WA said changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act (AHA), and the proposed closure of any remote communities, should not proceed without the full consent of Aboriginal people.

"Governments cannot decide where Aboriginal people live Western Australia," said Alliance spokesperson Anthony Watson.

"Closing remote communities is not acceptable to Aboriginal people. There are better ways to contain costs, reduce waste, and ensure efficiency and value for money. These communities play a valuable role in our society. We call on the State government to work with Aboriginal people, not against us. Opportunities to develop positive, productive communities must be pursued.

"The alternative of closing communities comes with immense social and economic costs. These costs will not just be borne by Aboriginal people, but will impact on all Western Australians, said Mr Watson.

"Who will bear the cost when people are forced into already under resourced towns? Where will the housing come from? Who will address the personal and social disruption that leaving Country brings?" he said.

The Alliance meeting was also highly critical of proposed changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act (AHA).

"We are very concerned that the current amendments to the AHA are discriminatory and do not give procedural fairness to Aboriginal people", said Alliance spokesperson Doris Eaton.

"The Aboriginal Heritage Act needs to be amended with the Minister incorporating the reasonable position of Aboriginal people in the proposed changes. We must have a say in laws that protect our cultural heritage and livelihood.



"This Government has an opportunity to develop strong heritage laws that respect Aboriginal people's law and culture, and allow appropriate development to happen in WA. We are ready to assist the government in coming to an acceptable position in reforming the AHA," said Mrs Eaton.

The Alliance met with the Minister for Regional Development Terry Redman, Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region Jacqui Boyde, Department of Regional Development Director General Ralph Addis, Member for Kimberley Josie Farrer, and Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ben Wyatt.

"We are extremely disappointed that Premier Barnett did not accept an invitation to meet with us," said Mr Watson.

"However, we were able to present our position, our concerns, and our solutions to Minister Redman, Mrs Boyde, Mrs Farrer and Mr Wyatt. We are hopeful that our position will be taken back to government, that closure of remote communities will be strongly reconsidered, and that changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act will not be made unilaterally.

"We want to focus on finding positive solutions. It's up to government to do the same," said Mr Watson.

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