



## Kimberley Land Council

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Barnett turns his back on Aboriginal people**

The Barnett Government's plan to shut down Aboriginal communities is discriminatory and unjust, says KLC Chairman Anthony Watson.

Closing up to 150 remote communities and forcing people to move into towns will not solve any problems, he said, but make them worse.

"If the WA State Government cannot continue to service remote communities, how is it going to cope with the extra service demands put on towns because of an increased population?" Mr Watson said.

"Colin Barnett has turned his back on Aboriginal people. His solution is to give up and do nothing at all. To say there is no answer; is not good enough. There is always an answer.

"It is the mandate of the government to look after its constituents. How is it possible that the government can choose to abandon a number of its people and pretend they don't exist and expect to get away with it?

"Aboriginal people do exist and we invite the Premier to come and meet with us in the Kimberley so we can show him the disastrous affects closing Indigenous communities will have.

"There is a solution. Mr Barnett just needs to come to the table and work with us to find one."

Mr Watson said the State Government had made its position on Indigenous issues clear, with this new attack the latest in a long list of negative actions.

"The State Government has made it clear to us that they are prepared to do whatever they can to undermine the rights of Aboriginal people in Western Australia," he said.

"This latest plan joins a long list of recent attacks on Aboriginal people including: Mr Barnett's refusal to recognise Indigenous people in the Constitution; changes to the WA Aboriginal Heritage Act that disregard Aboriginal heritage; failure to act on the suicide epidemic in the Kimberley; and numerous attempts to undermine native title by using it as a bargaining chip for services."

Mr Watson said shutting down Indigenous communities would undermine all the work that is being done to create jobs and generate an income stream in remote communities.

"There's a lot of work that is being done to capitalise on the enormous economic opportunities that are unfolding in our region and to create cultural enterprises that use traditional knowledge to stimulate economic activities," he said.

“At the same time we are enhancing people’s connection to country, improving health and well-being and driving social change.

“Now is the time for the State Government to work with Aboriginal people so we can achieve our goals and improve our communities. If we don’t work together to find a solution then we will never achieve anything.”

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