



Kimberley Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

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State Government community reforms all PR and no substance

The State Government's reforms to improve living in remote communities are a blatant PR and marketing exercise that tell us nothing, KLC Chair Anthony Watson said.

"What we need is a change of attitude across the board, where Aboriginal people are trusted to control their lives. In the end, that includes making the hard decisions.

"We have been waiting since November for the State Government to reveal its bold and visionary plan about closing remote Aboriginal communities and what do we get? A media release and five pretty fact sheets.

"The reality is the state of Aboriginal affairs in WA is far more complex than that. This is about people's lives not flashy posters. The lack of a detailed comprehensive report is insulting to Indigenous people."

Mr Watson said he hoped Mr Barnett was true to his word and delivered on his promise that "Aboriginal people will be extensively consulted and fully informed."

"We have an opportunity to create change, but Aboriginal people need to be involved and empowered if this is going to succeed," he said.

"Consultation is due to start in May but we are yet to see any details. A new reform unit is also going to be formed to consult directly with remote communities by August. Who's going to be on the reform unit and how much is it going to cost?"

Mr Watson said the establishment of Regional Strategic Advisory Councils and District Leadership Groups as a way to involve Aboriginal people lacked thought and substance.

"Every time governments look to create change they set up an advisory group or a committee. In reality these bodies are there to provide advice and often that advice is largely ignored," he said.

"Any advisory council or leadership group the government sets up to address community reforms must have decision-making powers.

"The KLC has been working with Indigenous leaders across the Kimberley to design a regional governance model that creates a new platform for engagement between Aboriginal people and the government to improve service delivery and make sure any programs are in line with community wants and needs.

"Empowering people is the only way to find solutions and a way forward to build stronger communities."

Mr Watson agreed there had been poor outcomes for Aboriginal people despite high levels of government spending.

“The State Government has said about \$51,931 is spent per Aboriginal person each year. How is this money being spent? How much of this money lands on the ground to provide real improvement to our lives? Where is the Roebourne case study and review?

“What people need to remember is that Aboriginal people are not spending this money, we have no say. It’s the government that has been wasting funds.

“Improving the lives of Aboriginal people is about more than closing communities or streamlining service provision, it’s about empowering Aboriginal people to make the decisions that affect their own lives.

“We all want the same thing. We want our children to be safe and to go to school, we want to have jobs and be economically independent but in order to do that we must work together. We call on the State Government to work with us, otherwise nothing is ever going to change.”

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