

1. Opening statement, Central Land Council – Les Turner

Good morning Senators.

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the sad loss of Mr Yunupingu, and extend the condolences of the Central Land Council to his family and the many people whose lives he has positively impacted. Today in Arnhem Land Mr Yunupingu will be laid to rest. A man who shined a 'beacon' for all of Australia.

The Central Land Council is guided by the strong governance of its council of 90 Aboriginal members elected by their communities to represent them.

The CLC has a strong record of effectively fulfilling its statutory functions, and has been representing, protecting and advocating for Aboriginal peoples' rights and interests since its establishment.

The CLC aims for continuous improvement in ensuring that its governance arrangements optimally support the delivery of positive outcomes for Aboriginal people. The organisation is committed to accountability and transparency, and models this throughout its work.

We welcome the Australian government's recent funding commitments to support Central Australia. In order to achieve sustainable outcomes, it remains critical that the funds targeting Aboriginal people are governed in accordance with Closing the Gap priority reforms, including formal partnerships and shared decision-making to achieve Aboriginal community-led outcomes, and building the community controlled sector.

Our remote communities continue to suffer from poverty, substandard living conditions, low income levels, and high costs of living. The overall lack of infrastructure investment in remote communities and insufficient access to basic services compounds this poverty and undermines our peoples' agency.

We know that increasing Aboriginal peoples' voice on policies and programs affecting their lives will make a significant difference in enabling effective policy that positively impacts the lives of Aboriginal people across our region.