

SENATE ESTIMATES OCTOBER 2017

OPENING STATEMENT

Good Morning. Firstly, I would also like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people on whose land we are meeting and pay tribute to their Elders past, present and emerging.

I would also like to pay my respects to all Indigenous people here with us today.

Please let me introduce Ms Kate Alderton, head of Policy and Strategy and Mrs Jodie Lindsay, CFO of ILC. Unfortunately, Mrs Tricia Button, who has recently been promoted to Deputy CEO of ILC is held up in Brisbane airport and sends her apologies.

Senators, the ILC tabled its Annual Report 2016–17 on 24 October. The work of the ILC Group - that is, the ILC and its three subsidiary companies, collectively met the majority of its targets set out in the Portfolio Budget Statements and almost reached the others.

Significantly, last financial year we acquired two properties and re-acquired one to ensure it remained within the Indigenous Estate... and just yesterday, we settled on an important land purchase in the Kimberley region of WA. This strategic and significant land asset acquired on behalf of the *Karra-jarri* People will provide opportunities for the Native Title Holders to develop land based enterprises in cultural and environmental tourism and provide an educational base for its Ranger team.

In 2016-17 we continued our active divestment of land to Indigenous groups. Six properties were granted to Indigenous corporations and a further four

properties have been approved for divestment by the ILC Board and are awaiting legal transfer.

We continued our significant contribution to the economic independence of Indigenous Australians through employment and training outcomes. All KPIS relating to direct Indigenous employment and training through the ILC Group and enabled through ILC funded projects—were substantially exceeded.

Putting our most valuable asset first - this year has seen a quantum improvement in how the ILC measures and manages the safety of its people across the Group and is an area we will strive for continuous improvement in.

We are also working hard to improve operational performance across the ILC Group. To this end, we have introduced a rigorous internal funding allocation process that provides for competitive bidding between ILC areas to achieve greater social, cultural, environmental and economic returns for Indigenous stakeholders through ILC investments—returns that will help us be far more effective in achieving our mandate and provide more resources for our land acquisition and land management functions.

Collaboration is key and we have worked hard this year to establish relationships that are more meaningful with Indigenous landholders through listening to their needs, and responding with the placement of key personnel in organisations to investigate opportunities, capacity building and enable skills transfer in emerging land based enterprises such as cultural tourism, agribusiness and niche Indigenous product development.

The ILC Board recently endorsed a strategy to dedicate effort and focus resources on growing enterprise opportunities for Indigenous landowners, specifically harnessing their unique market advantages of cultural and

traditional knowledge; and protecting intellectual property and rights as it relates to traditional knowledge applied to or drawn from the Indigenous Estate.

Since we last appeared before this Committee, we have undertaken national consultations with Indigenous stakeholders on the proposed reform to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act*. This involved 16 face-to-face sessions and representatives from 75 Indigenous corporations.

The proposed amendments will ensure the long-term sustainability of our primary source of funding, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Account and to expand ILC's functions in the care, use development and management of water to benefit Indigenous Australians.

Stakeholders heard our case for change - with the large majority of the face-to-face consultation sessions providing consensus support for both areas of reform. We received 24 written submissions on the two areas of reform. Of those submissions that addressed the proposal for Land Account reform – we received unanimous support and on water reform, 85% gave us support.

We are continuing active engagement with stakeholders regarding the ILC's fifth National Indigenous Land Strategy 2018–22—or NILS as it is known. The NILS is the ILC's primary policy document, tabled in Parliament by the Minister. This consultation is centred on a draft document setting out how the ILC is seeking to work with Indigenous groups—through deeper relationships, greater capacity building and more efficient internal business processes. We are seeking responses from stakeholders on opportunities to work with the

ILC. The aim is to have a NILS document for submission to the Minister before the end of this year.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to appear here today and to talk about the ILC's achievements over the last year – myself and the other members of my Executive team here today look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Senate F&PA Committee

Tabled Document

Inquiry: Supplementary Estimates 2017-18

Date/Time: 27/10/17

Witness Name: Mr. John Maher, CEO

Organisation: Indigenous Land Corporation