

SENATE ESTIMATES OPENING STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

- Good morning Senators, my name is Joe Martin-Jard, I am the CEO of the Northern Land Council.
- I will introduce my staff who have joined me, as we are asked questions through the morning.

STATEMENT

- My opening statement recognizes the actions of our organisation since our last estimates appearance.
- Recently the ANAO released an audit of the governance arrangements of the NLC.
- **The report found the NLC governance arrangements were LARGELY EFFECTIVE.**
- **We welcome the report assessment.**
- All strong organisations must undertake continuous improvement to maintain acceptable standards of service.
- The Northern Land Council is no different
 - We have actively engaged with the findings
 - In some cases, work was already underway to strengthen our governance
 - In other cases, we have established work which will further strengthen our governance
- During the process the Northern Land Council held over 100 meetings with ANAO, we supplied over 600,000 documents.

- We are buoyed to know that we are on the right track
 - We view the audit findings as an endorsement of the work we have been undertaking over the course of the last 18 months.
- While we acknowledge there is much to be done, we remain driven to have strong systems to effectively achieve outcomes for our constituents from across the remote Top End.
- While the audit sets us up well for the future, the NLC has recently reflected on our past.
- The NLC celebrated the 50-year anniversary of the first meeting of the Council which led the establishment of our organization
- The NLC together with our constituents, used the occasion to reflect on the vision of its founders, and the progress we have made to uphold Aboriginal sovereign rights in the Northern Territory.
- Our organization is proud to have had an integral part of the 50-year struggle
 - We have partnered with communities to achieve title over traditional land, allowing the maintenance of culture and
 - are increasing Aboriginal-led decision-making on community arrangements.
- Of course, we must also mention the recent referendum – it now forms part of the NLC history.

- We are **proudly** on the record as supporting a YES outcome.
- The results of the remote polling booths show our position clearly aligned with the views of our constituents.
- While we recognise the majority of Australians did not support a Voice to parliament, **we will continue to represent the views of our constituents, now and into the future.**

CLOSING

- Thank you for your time Senators.