

**OPENING STATEMENT
NORTHERN LAND COUNCIL
16 FEBRUARY 2024**

- **My name is Joe Martin-Jard and I am the CEO of the Northern Land Council.**

- **I would like to begin by acknowledging the recent passing of our respected Chairman.**
 - Our thoughts and deepest condolences remain with his family and loved ones. With respect to their wishes, we will refer to him throughout our submission as Dr. Bush Blanasi.

- **Dr. Bush Blanasi served as our Chairman for four terms, totalling over 12 years of dedicated leadership.**
 - He left an indelible mark on the NLC, spearheading significant advancements in Aboriginal land and sea rights, economic development, and elevating the voices of women within our organisation. His legacy will continue to inspire and guide us forward.

- **As this committee focuses on Finance and Public Administration, I understand you'll be interested in the NLC's current organisational arrangements.**
 - Following the passing of Dr. Bush Blanasi, we enacted a pause on Council meetings in-line with cultural protocols. These meetings will formally resume in the week of March 11th.

- **Despite this temporary pause, we continue to make progress on the organisational improvements we discussed during our last appearance.**
 - This includes actively implementing the recommendations outlined in the ANAO audit and undertaking broader structural changes to position the NLC for a strong future.

- **We undertake these endeavours not only to ensure the NLC's smooth functioning but also to honour the vision and leadership of Dr. Bush Blanasi.**

- We appreciate your understanding and look forward to addressing your questions today. Thank you.