



Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee Budget Estimates

Central Land Council appearance: Friday 7 June 2024

Opening statement, Central Land Council CEO – Les Turner

7 June 2024

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the levels of investment made by Aboriginal people in their own communities. The CLC works with Aboriginal groups to help them invest their income – primarily from land use agreements, including rents, royalties, leasing and compensation payments – in developing their own communities. We at the CLC support the groups to use their own knowledge and skills through planning and implementing community-driven projects.

Since 2005, Aboriginal groups in the CLC region have committed \$245 million to more than 2,700 community projects, ranging from multi-million-dollar, multi-year initiatives to small infrastructure projects. Projects have included preserving culture, community support programs, sport and rec programs and community infrastructure. Large scale community infrastructure is often done in collaboration with government departments, such as the Lajamanu water park and sports ground master plans. These projects build communities' capabilities, improve social outcomes and support our living culture to be able to thrive.

As the CLC highlighted in a recent media release, our members continue to call for practical and collaborative measures to combat domestic and family violence. Delivering domestic violence support services sits outside the statutory functions of the CLC, but we are able to advocate for effective measures in the interest of constituents. Addressing domestic and family violence is critical for our communities— that's what our constituents tell us, not just what we believe—and we call for additional funding to provide community-led initiatives and support services in the places where people live.

There have been some occasions when statements have been made that incorrectly group *all* land councils or *all* Aboriginal organisations on the basis of a concern regarding *one* of these organisations.

On 20 March 2024 it was asserted in the Senate that 'The ANAO investigations found accounting deficiencies and irregularities with all of the land councils in the Northern Territory.' Firstly, I wish to correct the record to note that the CLC's 2023 ANAO performance audit and the independent auditors report in the financial statement made **no findings** about accounting deficiencies and irregularities. Secondly, we continue to welcome all genuine scrutiny including that of this committee and that of the ANAO and the other reviews that we are subject to such as the NIAA review of our native title representative body functions.

In relation to the 2023 ANAO performance audit of the CLC, as previously reported we have accepted all 11 recommendations made by the ANAO. We have now addressed 8 of these 11 and expect to complete 10 before 30 June 2024. The final recommendation is longer term in nature, requiring the development of agreement software, and is expected to be completed in late 2025.

We are proud of our track record of good governance, community-driven work and strong leadership.