

## Opening Statement, CLC CEO – Les Turner

---

**8 November 2024**

In September 2024 the Central Land Council elected Mr Warren Williams from Yuendumu as Chair and Ms Barbara Shaw from Mt Nancy Town Camp as Deputy Chair.

In October this year the CLC celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, making us one of the longest standing Aboriginal community controlled organisations in this country. Our elders laid the foundations for a strong, democratic organisation, bringing together elected representatives from nine regions in Central Australia, covering 778,000 square kilometres, to be their voice.

We are proud of our long history of achievement. From the outset, Aboriginal people struggled to have our rights recognised and encoded in legislation. The CLC has provided stability and direction, consistently operating within legislative boundaries to deliver for our people. We operate within the clear constraints of our enabling legislation, the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, the Native Title Act, and the PGPA. We have an unblemished record in meeting statutory requirement.

There has been a lot of media attention on Alice Springs and surrounds in recent times. I want to point out that the CLC, along with organisations like the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress health service, the Tangentyere Council, the NPY Women's Council, the Anyinginyi health service in Tennant Creek, and Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation are organisations that exemplify Aboriginal community control and have existed for many years.

I want to make the point that these organisations are delivering on the ground, and should be a model for government investment. They clearly deliver economic and social benefits—and not just for the Aboriginal community but the broader Central Australian community. They are Aboriginal community led and based and they are the opposite of intervention thinking. I would like to commend the Australia Government for continuing to invest in Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

I would also like to commend the Australian Government for recognising the exceptional needs in Central Australia and responding by investing in infrastructure, education, vocational education and training, youth services, leadership and governance, community based prevention of domestic violence and crisis accommodation. The results may take some time to flow, but we know it is happening. There is already data to support positive results in education and school attendance.