



Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2025-26

Central Land Council appearance: Wednesday 8 October 2025

Opening statement, Central Land Council CEO – Les Turner

The Central Land Council (CLC) continues its work to advance the rights and interests of Aboriginal people in our region and deliver our statutory responsibilities. Our 2024-25 annual report demonstrates the breadth and depth of the CLC's work – protecting and enhancing Aboriginal land ownership and interests and supporting Aboriginal people to protect their sacred sites, look after their country, benefit from economic land use opportunities and drive their own community development.

As an example, in March, we achieved the dedication of the new Central Western Desert Indigenous Protected Area. With this new Indigenous Protected Area in place the CLC is now supporting traditional owners to manage a conservation area larger than Victoria.

We have published our new corporate plan, setting the direction for the CLC's work for the next four years, in line with Council's goals and our statutory functions.

We have elected our new 90-member Council for a three year term. Representatives are already speaking up strongly for their communities. At our August Council meeting, Council set its policy priorities for the next three years. These include liveable housing, strong water governance and safe drinking water, protecting land and native title rights, lowering the cost of remote living, strengthening Aboriginal governance and building resilient communities and homelands.

In August, our people marked 50 years since the historic Gurindji land handback. Later this month, Council will meet at Yulara alongside the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the handback of Uluru-Kata Tjuta to Anangu traditional owners. Next year will be 50 years since the enactment of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and 60 years since Gurindji walked off Wave Hill station.

Land rights are strong in the Northern Territory, but Aboriginal people's hard-won collective rights and customary decision-making roles are being undermined by legislative changes by the Northern Territory Government. There has been a lack of consultation on key legislation and policies that impact our people – including on sacred sites laws and water rights. In addition, incarceration rates are soaring and racism in the police force remains a concern. We await the NT police anti-racism strategy and hope to see it reflect the findings from the Kumanjayi Walker coronial inquest as well as a strong implementation and monitoring plan.

We look forward to discussing today our work to deliver for Aboriginal peoples' land rights and interests across the CLC region, which supports the continuation of our peoples' enduring culture.