



Parliament of Australia

Senate

Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Aboriginal Land Rights and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013

Northern Land Council

Submission

3 May 2013

SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013****SUBMISSION**

The Northern Land Council (NLC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the *Aboriginal Land Rights and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013*.

The purpose of the Bill, by means of amendments to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Land Rights Act)* and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, is to establish a framework which enables the town of Jabiru and two adjacent portions to be granted as Aboriginal land in a manner which uniquely recognises Mirarr traditional ownership, environmental, and World Heritage values.

In that respect, Jabiru and the adjacent portions are presently located within Kakadu National Park, being a recognised World Heritage area.

The NLC supports the Bill.

As noted in the second reading speech, the Bill implements an in principle settlement reached in November 2009 regarding the Jabiru native title application. The primary parties to the settlement are the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory, Energy Resources of Australia Ltd, and the Mirarr traditional owners.

The settlement involves a grant of Aboriginal land under the *Land Rights Act* which legally recognises Mirarr traditional ownership and appropriately accords the Mirarr significant input into the town's future governance and development. Additionally, the agreed arrangements under the Bill ensure that the interests of governments and other parties are protected through long term leases and related arrangements.

The settlement addresses an historical anomaly arising from the 1977 Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry which, despite acknowledging Mirarr traditional ownership of the land on which Jabiru was subsequently developed (to service the development of the Ranger uranium mine), excluded that land from being granted as Aboriginal freehold under the *Land Rights Act*.

Importantly, the settlement provides long term certainty for stakeholders and third party interests, bearing in mind the expiry of current arrangements in 2021.

Separately, the NLC also supports the addition of the parcel of land at Patta to Schedule 1 of the *Land Rights Act*.