

Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

More needed to Close the Gap

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Northern Land Council Chief Executive, Norman Fry, welcomed the Northern Territory Government's commitment, announced yesterday, to end Indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory, however is disappointed that only \$286 million over 5-years will be allocated to address the significant short-fall in services to Aboriginal people.

"The NLC has consistently highlighted the disgraceful underspending on services to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory," Mr Fry said.

"All Governments for the past 30-years have failed to provide adequate services, have failed to develop local economies, and have failed to supply the resources to address the true causes of violence and poverty. Last year alone the NT Government reported over \$100 million underspent on Aboriginal service delivery. This simply isn't good enough, and reflects the failure of self government in the Northern Territory."

"The Territory Government's *Closing The Gap* annual allocation of \$57.2 million does not begin to address this long history of underspending by successive Territory administrations."

"We are also disappointed that only limited additional resources will be made available to community based organisations controlled by Aboriginal people. These organisations will play a crucial role in the delivery of services in communities, and should be afforded greater recognition," Mr Fry said.

"We obviously welcome the focus of Governments on ending Aboriginal disadvantage in the NT. However, if the NT Government is genuine in its commitment then a serious investment in Aboriginal service delivery is required. As a bare minimum, it is essential that the NT Government be required to expend in full, the Commonwealth Grants Commission's allocations to Indigenous programs."

"Economic development of Aboriginal land and the development of the local labour market are crucial to the future prosperity of the Northern Territory economy. Taxation incentives to encourage such development is appropriate, and the NLC welcomes the NT Government's support of such initiatives," Mr Fry said.

"The inequality gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians is widening. A concerted effort is required now to wind back 30-years of neglect of Aboriginal communities. It is in the interest of all Territorians that this inequality gap is finally addressed. If it is not, then the Northern Territory's future is bleak, and the Territory will not be such a pleasant place to live and work. The future of the NT hangs in the balance." Mr Fry said.