



LARRAKIA NATION

MEDIA RELEASE

Larrakia Nation: Sacred Sites Bill Enables Political Control and Strips Power from Aboriginal Custodians

Darwin, 31 March 2025 – Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation has issued a scathing condemnation of the Northern Territory Government’s proposed amendments to the *Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989*, warning the changes dismantle independent statutory protections and expose sacred sites to political and commercial interference.

Chairperson Travis Borsi said the Bill is a targeted legislative attack that undermines Aboriginal lore, custodianship, and the Authority itself — enabling covert ministerial control over what is supposed to be an impartial body safeguarding sacred sites.

“This is not just about red tape. It’s about control,” Mr Borsi said.

“The Government is giving itself power to people who can report back to the Minister to remove Aboriginal members who speak out or resist development. It’s a clear strategy to silence dissent and neutralise Aboriginal voices who uphold cultural lore over commercial interest.”

“If this Act is gutted, the only thing standing between sacred Country and bulldozers will be a Minister with a conflict of interest. That is a breach of trust and a legal disgrace.”

Mr Borsi went further, stating that the Government’s actions are part of a broader pattern of colonial erasure and exploitation.

“We’ve said it before and we’ll say it again: if the Crown insists on rewriting the rules, let it start by proving that this land was ever *terra nullius*. We never ceded it. And we will not stand in silence and allow this government to legislate away our inherent rights as custodians.”

Legal Red Flags in the Proposed Bill

1. Ministerial Overreach and Political Interference

The amendments allow the Minister to appoint two Authority members. This opens the door to covert political influence, where ministerial appointees can be used to sway decisions or target Aboriginal members whose views conflict with pro-development agendas.

2. Undermining Cultural Lore and Statutory Safeguards

The legislation reframes the Authority's core role — from one of cultural protection to one of procedural facilitation for land use. It prioritises "certainty and processes for economic development" at the expense of cultural authority, legal integrity, and traditional consent — a significant departure from the principles of the *Sacred Sites Act* and the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

3. Eroding Custodian Control Over Site Access

Provisions that allow Authority Certificates to be transferred between parties — without new consultation with traditional owners — dilute the authority of custodians and reduce the consultation process to a one-time administrative box-tick. This severs future decision-makers from cultural accountability and opens sacred sites to long-term exploitation without renewed consent.

The proposed amendments are a legal Trojan horse. They are framed as “efficiency reforms,” but in substance, they represent a power grab — enabling the NT Government to exert political influence over sacred site decisions and weaken Aboriginal authority at the highest level.

Larrakia Nation calls for the immediate withdrawal of the Bill and demands that the Northern Territory Government uphold its obligations under Aboriginal lore, statutory law, and moral duty.

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