

Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group Meeting Communique

Meeting in Alice Springs, Northern Territory

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The Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group advises the Australian Government on northern development, maximising benefits and implementation outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group held its eleventh meeting in Alice Springs, Northern Territory 22-23 May, 2024.

Following a warm welcome by Traditional Owner Que Nakamarra Kenny of the Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation, the IRG Chair Mr Colin Saltmere, led discussion on the group's three priorities for 2024:

- Growing First Nations employment in the north by prioritising local job opportunities
- Addressing the cost of living in First Nations communities in northern Australia
- Strengthening First Nations' data sovereignty and protecting First Nations' knowledge.

Discussions focussed on avenues to leverage current or emerging government policies and inquiries to ensure better outcomes and to provide advice on improving the social and economic prosperity of Indigenous Australians in northern Australia.

The Hon. Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia and her advisor for northern Australia attended the meeting in person. Members in attendance were Colin Saltmere (Chair), Troy Fraser, Gillian Mailman, Ninielia Mills and Flora Warrior. IRG members Peter Jefferies and Tara Craigie were an apology for the meeting.

In progressing their priorities, the IRG met with Hon. Madeleine King MP, Minister for Northern Australia; Cooperative Research Centre for Northern Australia Chief Scientist, Professor Allan Dale; Central Australian Controller and Deputy CEO for Regional Growth Ms Dorrelle Anderson; and officials from the Coalition of Peaks, Department of Treasury, National Indigenous Australians Agency and IP Australia to discuss key government policies impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the north including:

- Remote Jobs Economic Development Program;
- Reforms to Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act;
- National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities;
- Establishment of a national First Nations Economic Development Partnership;
- The Central Australia Plan; and

- The drafting of legislation to protect and commercialise Indigenous knowledge.

At the conclusion of proceedings IRG members were joined by Minister King MP at Simpsons Gap where they were provided with a bush foods demonstration from nationally renowned Kungkas Can Cook, Rayleen Brown. The presentation highlighted the significant economic and social outcomes from Indigenous harvesters, traders, enterprises, community, consumers and suppliers working together to grow the industry in the north.

Next IRG meeting

The next meeting of the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group is scheduled for August 2024 in Karratha, Western Australia.