



## Remote Territorians left behind in natural disaster response

16 March 2026

In the wake of historic flooding across the Top End, the Northern Land Council is calling on all levels of Government to listen to Aboriginal voices in the development and roll-out of disaster management in the Northern Territory.

Over the last few months, residents from remote Aboriginal communities across the Big Rivers region have been impacted by severe weather and unprecedented flooding.

Residents have in some cases faced multiple evacuations, inconsistent levels of care across evacuation centres, and serious concerns around food security.

Emergency management plans must take into consideration the cultural and remote needs of community members so that relief is delivered in an effective and safe way.

The only way this can happen is by listening to people who have first-hand experience of these natural disasters and disaster relief efforts. This should be followed by support for these solutions.

The Northern Land Council has written to Territory and Federal Government Ministers, calling for them to meet with community leaders from across the impacted communities to hear concerns about conditions at evacuation centres and the emergency response.

These requests are not new. For years, Traditional Owners and the Northern Land Council have advocated strongly for Aboriginal leaders to have a seat at the decision-making table before, during and after a natural disaster occurs.

The NLC has consistently advocated for the following measures:

- Evacuation centres to be located within close proximity to remote communities across the NLC region.
- Emergency shelters and evacuation centres that are culturally safe and support cultural and kinship practices.
- Agreed level of support within emergency shelters and evacuation centres, including food, sanitary and bedding supplies to be established.
- Open and consistent communication with Traditional Owners, community leaders and Aboriginal people before, during and following an emergency incident.

- Early communication and notification of upcoming/ potential emergency incidents to support Traditional Owners and community members in order to make informed decisions around evacuation and other preventive measures.

This work must begin now. The NLC looks forward to working with all levels of government to develop an effective disaster management approach.

Quotes attributable to NLC Chair, Matthew Ryan:

“Natural disasters are not new in the Territory. The scale of this flooding however has shown what happens when you don’t have good systems in place to support vulnerable community members.

“We want to see better coordination of the emergency response and more shelters built.

“In 2025, we met with the relevant Territory and national agencies about this issue. It’s clear we weren't heard.”

“This work can’t wait another wet season. Both levels of Government need to start talking to Aboriginal people and figure out a better way forward.”

- **ENDS** -

**Media contact:** [media@nlc.org.au](mailto:media@nlc.org.au).