



**NORTHERN  
LAND COUNCIL**  
*Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life*

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Native Title Holders challenge tourism on Lorella Springs Station

18 December 2025

The Northern Land Council (NLC), on behalf of the Burdal Riley, Murrungun Wunubari and Mambali Walangara Native Title Holders, has been in the Federal Court this week to challenge a non-pastoral use permit and water licence granted to Lorella Springs Station by the NT Government, citing serious risks to sacred sites and long-standing failures to respect Native Title Rights.

For decades, Lorella Springs Station has operated a tourism business, known as *Lorella Springs Wilderness Park*, without the permission of Traditional Owners. On 31 March 2025, the NT Pastoral Land Board granted the station-owner a non-pastoral use permit to continue tourism activities, despite multiple submissions by the Native Title Holders who were concerned that the tourism activities involved the observation of Aboriginal cultural works and activities, and had interfered with sacred sites in the past.

The NLC have argued that the non-pastoral use permit cannot be granted unless there is an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), because tourism activities occur in areas containing rock art, burial grounds, ceremonial sites and other protected places.

The NLC have also claimed that Native Title Holders were denied adequate notice and a fair opportunity to respond. A permit was granted by the Pastoral Land Board at a scale 17 times greater than what was applied for by the station owner.

Speaking in Darwin this week NLC Chair Matthew Ryan said the permits place culturally significant areas at serious risk.

“There is a real and immediate risk of damage to sacred sites if permits are granted without an agreement in place with the native title holders.

“The NT Government has gone too far.”

Native Title Holders travelled from Borroloola, Numbulwar and Ngukurr to attend the hearing, calling for respect, justice and genuine consultation.

*Darwin*

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Traditional Owner Rex Isaac said meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners by the station owner is essential.

“What’s important is to get justice for our sites, for our land,” Mr Isaac said.

“If he wants to build a relationship with the Traditional Owners, he needs to come down and talk to us about the area he wants tourists to go on.”

The NLC is also challenging a water extraction licence allowing large volumes of water to be taken from Rosie Creek, a waterway connected to multiple sacred sites, arguing the approval process failed to properly notify and consult Native Title Holders.

The NLC says the case underscores the need for governments and tourism operators to comply with the law, protect sacred sites and place Native Title Holders at the centre of decisions affecting their Country.

A decision by the Federal Court is expected in 2026.

**ENDS**

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Click [here](#) to download photo of Traditional Owners of Lorella Springs Station at Federal Court.

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