

LAND RIGHTS NEWS

NORTHERN EDITION



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

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HATS OFF TO 2025



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AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST ABORIGINAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1973

● EDITORIAL

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Gurruwilling ranger Otto Campion with his granddaughter Ena Campion (Kathleen Campion, mother of Ena, in the foreground) at the Arafura Swamp IPA Celebration

● DISCLAIMER

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Q&A

with NLC Chair
Matthew Ryan



Re-elected NLC Chair, Matthew Ryan with Nathalia Wauchope from the NLC media team.

Nathalia Wauchope, daughter of former Chair, the late Dr Bush-Blanasi and Northern Land Council (NLC) media team member, sat down with the newly re-elected Chair, Mr Matthew Ryan, to chat to him about his vision for the next three years for the NLC.

Mr Ryan, can you tell me what community you come from and a little bit about your history with the NLC?
I'm from Maningrida in West Arnhem, one of the largest communities in the Top End. I was a former Djelk ranger for Bawinanga and later I was elected as a council member. I worked tirelessly under the leadership of former chairs. Seeing their leadership style, I wanted to follow in their footsteps.

Mr Ryan, you've been the chair now for over 18 months, what do you think the challenges are for the NLC as

you head into the next three years?
There are going to be massive challenges, especially with the current government we have here in the NT. We have to be on our toes, and we have to be very strong in our stance in terms of advocacy and supporting our Traditional Owners right across our seven regions.

This is especially true around the changes to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and the Territory Coordinator: we must watch what is happening here carefully.

Thinking about being here in three years' time, in December 2028 and looking back over your time as Chair, what would you like to see the NLC has achieved under your leadership?
I want to see that we have achieved more for our Traditional Owners and our constituents.

I would like to see that we have successfully advocated with our stakeholders, and both the Northern Territory and federal governments. I'm hoping we bring more federal funding for Aboriginal corporations, and we have supported economic development and opportunities for people right across the regions.

What are your priorities?
We need to address current issues that are affecting Aboriginal people right now. The growing incarceration rate within the prison system is a priority. We want to do better in that space as the Northern Land Council.

I also want to see all our offices across the region well-resourced with more staff, so we can do good work across the seven regions.

Supporting culture, country and opportunity in 2025

Message from
NLC CEO
YUSEPH DEEN



IT'S now been just over 12 months since I began as CEO of the Northern Land Council (NLC) and what a year it has been — a journey of learning, leading, and celebrating the many achievements of this organisation.

Despite the changes we have seen to Aboriginal rights in the Territory at the start of this year — the creation of the Territory Coordinator position, amendments to water rights and changes to the Sacred Sites Act— we still have good news to share.

Earlier this year, the NLC negotiated a landmark deal for the Kakadu National Park Lease with the Commonwealth Government. The deal will make sure Traditional Owners have a stronger

voice in the management of the park and fairer rent. Through this new lease, Bininj/Mungguy will have better pathways to develop business on country and enjoy improved options for living on country.

In November, we marked a historic milestone with the signing of an agreement between Traditional Owners, the NT Government and SunCable for the largest solar farm in Australia. This partnership reflects our commitment to supporting Traditional Owners and native title holders in making informed decisions about their country, while also working with these groups to ensure opportunities continue for generations to come.

In December, we celebrated the significant victory of the Larrakia people in protecting their sacred site at Stokes Hill. Yet this is only the first step in what may become a larger

struggle with the NT Government, whose ongoing lack of support for sacred sites is deeply concerning.

We remain firm in our support for culture and country, yet we also recognise the importance of supporting development opportunities under instructions from Traditional Owners.

I extend my congratulations to re-elected Chair Matthew Ryan, our new Deputy Chair Lorraine Jones, and the incoming executive. I look forward to working alongside the Council's leadership to set our direction for the next three years. While challenges lie ahead, I am confident in our collective strength and proud to continue the vital work of representing Traditional Owners across the Top End as they negotiate land-use agreements, native title and development opportunities, while maintaining and upholding their commitment to their land and culture.

A word from Tony Jack, outgoing NLC Water Committee Chair



Outgoing NLC Water Committee Chair Tony Jack.

"If we put our mind to it and put our spirit into it, we can be very strong."

THE Northern Land Council (NLC) Water Committee was formed in 2022 under the leadership of the late NLC Chair Dr Bush-Blanasi. The committee was formed to make sure that Traditional Owners have a seat at the table with government and business when important decisions are being made about water.

The committee is made up of two NLC Full Council members from each of the seven regions. Tony Jack was chosen as the first Water Committee Chair, to implement Dr Bush-Blanasi's vision for the committee as a strong voice on policy and decisions about water on country.

At the Full Council meeting in December this year, new members were chosen to sit on the Water Committee. In the lead-up to this meeting, Mr Jack reflected on his time as Chair over the last three years:

Since we started, we'd been getting stronger and stronger every time we met. It was a good thing to see – we've created something from nothing.

The committee means we have Aboriginal Traditional Owner groups sitting at the table, talking about policies, environment, water plans, all our sacred sites, what matters to us and what to do going forward into the future.

We finished consulting and pushing for a better Mataranka Water Allocation Plan. Now that is approved, we have to learn from that going forward. Everybody is watching and monitoring now.

The big question is, 'How do we work together now with all the stakeholders, including government right up to the minister?'

As we got stronger, we had government agencies coming through the door, reaching out to the NLC Water Committee. We talked to the Water Resources team, Remote Water team, the Water Controller and even the Commonwealth water department.

We stand up for our people on water

allocation, water licences and trading. With all of these kinds of talks, we also want to work with the Water Controller. Recently we had the Commonwealth water department coming through the door to talk to us about the water trigger and other policies. Something we learnt was that if we're not happy with our Territory Water Plan, we can put a strong case together and reach out to the Commonwealth environment and water minister, asking him to step in through the water trigger process.

This is historic – it shows it can work! This is the opportunity that we created

"We have to be at the table. The decisions we make here are going to benefit us in the long term, for future generations. It's important to get it right."

with the Water Committee, so we can have proper consultation.

If we put our mind to it and put our spirit into it, we can be very strong.

Now that all the other land councils have heard about us, they also want to come to the table and be part of the journey. If we can get the other land

councils at the table, we can make the committee stronger for us all.

A message I have for the next Water Committee is this:

'Don't give up. We have to be at the table. The decisions we make here are going to benefit us in the long term, for future generations. It's important to get it right.'

Community mob and Traditional Owner groups, please reach out to the NLC Water Committee. We have a Water Committee now, and you can tell us about how you want to make decisions on water.

I hope the next Water Committee

keeps fighting strong. I hope they reach out to the other land councils so we can form a united voice.

I'm honoured to have been the Chair. And thank you to the NLC Full Council for giving me that opportunity.

Tony Jack

Sacred Sites under threat from NT Government

After a long fight with government and developers, Larrakia Elders have had a win over the Stokes Hill Wharf hotel development. The developer pulled out after pressure from the Northern Land Council (NLC) and Larrakia people. But the fight is not over, and won't be over until all sacred sites in the NT are protected.



Larrakia Elders Bill Risk OAM and Helen Secretary at Stokes Hill, Darwin.

According to Larrakia dreaming, the Tawny Frogmouth is a sentinel that guards the entrance to Stokes Hill Wharf – surveying the land and sea, keeping country and people safe.

Bill Risk OAM and Helen Secretary are two Larrakia senior custodians who uphold the traditions handed down to them.

When they said 'No' to a proposal for a multi-story hotel at Stokes Hill Wharf, they expected the developers to come back with a proposal that was smaller and lower in height. The site is sacred to all Larrakia people and the height of the proposed building would impact on the traditions associated with the site.

Bill Risk and Helen Secretary had confidence in the NT Sacred Sites Act. For many years it protected their sacred sites from damage, especially through development.

However, earlier this year, the NT Government made changes to the Act. The changes to the Act meant that new parties could be added to the certificate, and projects could proceed without consultation with Traditional

Owners or sacred site custodians.

Two new parties were added to the original 20-year old Authority Certificate for the early development of Darwin Waterfront. They said the certificate allowed them to build a multi-story hotel on the site. But it was the same or very similar to the proposal the Larrakia people had already rejected.

Bill Risk and Helen Secretary, representing all Larrakia people, were angry and frustrated at the proposed building, and the disrespect the NT Government had shown towards their sacred site. They have both had sleepless nights, worrying about all the sacred sites around Darwin.

Bill Risk explained the importance of the site: "It impacts all the rivers, Elizabeth River and across our country, it is the story of who we are and where we come from. Sacred sites are not just innate objects. They are living. They are active and they can be benevolent or malevolent. Our grandmother, Topsy Secretary, she told us about how Cyclone Tracy ripped through Darwin, and how this was because our country

was being desecrated and not cared for. And she told us how the land had called up the cyclone, and we've just had a cyclone right now. I see the landscape so scarred."

Helen Secretary described the cultural importance of the Tawny Frogmouth Story:

"If there were invaders, people coming into Larrakia waters through the port, it (the Tawny Frogmouth) would go and fly up. It had to have the view, the view of the harbour.

This view of the harbour would be obstructed if the high-rise development at Stokes Hill Wharf goes ahead."

The change to the Sacred Site Act is not limited to the Larrakia people. It means that the NT Government can transfer any sacred site certificate without consultation. It could affect all sacred sites in the NT.

Helen Secretary and Bill Risk lodged an application under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 (ATSIHP Act) in November to put a stop to the proposed development. The developer – SingHaiyi

Group – has since pulled out.

Helen Secretary and Bill Risk are pleased that this development will not go ahead, but without the protection of the NT Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, they are still worried about future plans for development.

"We [Larrakia people] have never stopped development, but we will continue to have problems until the changes that the NT Government made earlier this year are removed," said Helen Secretary.

"We have been completely stripped of our power, and this will affect not just the Larrakia people, but Aboriginal people throughout the Territory."

Bill Risk is defiant, but warns about the future. "We have taken all necessary steps within our powers to stand in opposition to this development, and will continue to stand against any development that desecrates and damages our sacred sites into the future."

Traditional Owners close 70-year deal through native title rights in the Barkly

Traditional Owners said 'Yes' to a 70-year agreement with the big business SunCable to allow it to build Australia's biggest solar farm on Powell Creek Station, near Elliott.

In November, Traditional Owners, the Northern Land Council (NLC) and SunCable met in Elliott to sign off on a multi-million-dollar Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA).

More than 200 Traditional Owners from Walanypirri, Jangirulu and Bamayu groups negotiated over three years with SunCable. Now, Traditional Owners will have multi-generational wealth, training, jobs and business opportunities through this deal.

Powell Creek Traditional Owners had their native title rights recognised in 2020, giving them the right to negotiate on this agreement.

Walanypirri Traditional Owner Peter Henderson said their native title rights

mean they can protect culture and country.

"Culture and country is really important to us," Mr Henderson said.

"We hope other Traditional Owners can also stand together and negotiate agreements to bring business on their country, just like us."

SunCable first approached the NLC in 2019, then began talks with Traditional Owners about what they wanted to build on their country.

Negotiations were long and not always easy. Traditional Owners often had to travel and take time off work to negotiate. During this time, the leadership and staff at SunCable changed and so did their ideas about

what they would build on country and how the deal should be structured.

The deal includes environmental and cultural heritage protection, financial benefits and ranger funding.

This is a significant deal that NLC and Traditional Owners were able to negotiate, showing the strength of the groups and their commitment to working together to get a better deal for all their families and children.

NLC Chair Matthew Ryan said the agreement shows that Aboriginal Territorians are leading the way by participating in genuine engagement with big business.

"This is about strengthening self-determination, building sustainable communities, and contributing to the long-term economic viability of the Northern Territory," Chair Ryan said.

"It is great to see that Traditional Owners will be prospering from

this agreement for years to come, providing jobs, training and many other opportunities."

Chair Ryan said the agreement means investment in the Barkly region, which gives Elliott the opportunity to be a hub again.

"Elliott could be a one-stop shop. There is possibility for infrastructure like accommodation, a proper food shop, a sewerage system to be set up and for Elliott to become a hub for all."

Bamayu Traditional Owner Linda Benson hopes this deal bring jobs to Elliott so future generations can have opportunities their generation never had.

"We hope this deal can help to improve Elliott, so our families can live and work on country."

Traditional Owners, NLC, SunCable and the Elliott community are looking forward to a bright future for the region.



Bamayu Traditional Owners, Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy and NLC Chair Matthew Ryan with NT Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Steve Edgington, SunCable CEO Ryan Willemsen-Bell, Top End PBC Chair Lorraine Jones and NLC CEO Yuseph Deen at the signing of the land use agreement in Elliott.

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Protecting land and water is an ongoing fight

Leading voices from First Nations, environmental and social justice movements call for action.

For a long time, promises of great prosperity have come at the cost of country. In September, people from across the north of Australia met in Darwin to listen and share experiences about protecting country at Australia's Great North Conference.

Panels from across our region discussed the current impacts of government and company decisions on the climate and environment, and what communities are doing to make their voices heard.

Water was a big topic. There were stories from Fitzroy River in WA, the Roper River in the NT and Mitchell River in North Queensland.

The Ropa Woda Governance Council was formed by 13 Traditional Owner groups across the Roper River. They shared about the Roper River story and what it means to their people.

Melissa Andrews-Wurramarra, one of the members from the council, said they are maintaining and revitalising culture on country through the alliance to protect the Roper River catchment.

"We don't want to lose more. Enough is enough. Our culture is still standing strong through our cultural governance, that is why we have formed the Ropa Woda Governance Council involving all the clan groups from every community along the Roper River," Ms Andrews-Wurramarra said.

"Together we are representing homelands and springs. Our authority tool."

Melissa stood with Rosina Farrell, Adam Gaston, and Miliwanga Wurrben in front of a painted map of the Roper River.

"This map doesn't have a picture of our ancestors, but they are there," she said.

Arid Lands Environment Centre, Cairns and Far North Environment Centre, Environment Centre NT and Environs Kimberley hosted the conference on Larrakia Country.



Members of the Ropa Woda Governance Council.

Environment Centre NT executive director Kirsty Howey said the north of Australia is at great risk.

"The most destructive projects in the country are planned for Australia's north, because too many politicians and corporate interests see our communities as a sacrifice zone rather than a global treasure for nature," Ms Howey said.

Mangarrayi back NT Supreme Court case

Mangarrayi Traditional Owners travelled over 400 km to support a court case against an approved Mataranka Water Allocation Plan.

For Jocelyn James, Manggarayi Traditional Owner, this was her mother's fight to protect their water, and is now her fight. Water is sacred to them.

"My mother fought to protect our water, our springs and our river. Now it is my job," she said.

Despite fierce opposition from Traditional Owners, tourism and environment groups, the Northern Territory Government approved the Mataranka Water Allocation Plan in December 2024.

In November 2025, the Environment Centre NT took NT Environment Minister Joshua Burgoyne to the NT Supreme Court to argue the Mataranka Water Allocation Plan is invalid.

Mangarrayi Traditional Owners went to Darwin to represent their country, fight for their future and their ancestors. They are worried the current water allocation plan allows businesses to



Traditional Owners and the Environment Centre NT oppose Mataranka Water Plan.

take too much water, which is hurting the waterways.

Ms James said the plan takes too much water and the Mangarrayi Traditional Owners are watching their river and floodplains die.

"No one is listening to us. Where will we go if they take all our water?"

"This water is our life, our culture and belongs to our young [people's] future," said Ms James.

The water plan allocation proposes to take 62,000 megalitres of water each year from the aquifer that feeds water into Bitter Springs and the Roper River.

Ngalakgan Traditional Owner Melissa Andrews-Wurramarra travelled to Darwin for the court case because the current plan puts the water around her country at risk, too.

"I am from the Roper, too, but down Ngukurr area. I am worried, too, about

the water because, if it's going to go down upstream, we're going to get a lot of saltwater down our way.

"I am here to support my family from the Jilkminggan Mataranka area and Katherine mob from Jawoyn. I look forward to what the case is going to bring.

"Hopefully we get a positive outcome."

Arafura Swamp IPA



Rangers and community members dancing at Arafura Swamp IPA signing.



Gurruwilling ranger, Dr Otto Campion.



Signatories to the Arafura Swamp IPA agreement.

Arafura Swamp IPA marks new era for rangers & Traditional Owners

FOR the Traditional Owners of the Arafura Swamp area, 22 October 2025 marked the end of many years of consultation and the beginning of a new chapter in caring for country.

On this day, the Arafura Swamp region that borders east, west and central Arnhem Land was recognised as an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). The Arafura Swamp Rangers Aboriginal Corporation (ASRAC) and Traditional Owners will now proudly manage the region under the new ASRAC IPA.

Known as Gurruwiling, the swamp is one of the most culturally and environmentally important wetlands in Australia because of its rich biodiversity,

rare wildlife, and the strong cultural knowledge that has shaped its care for thousands of years.

The IPA extends to the Swamp Catchment and into Castlereagh Bay and surrounding areas. It covers more than 1.3 million hectares of land and water. The IPA will help restore and protect wetlands, billabongs, jungle, woodland and marine habitat. It will give ranger groups opportunities to work on country and protect cultural sites.

The dedication celebration included bungul (traditional Yolŋu ceremony involving song, dance, storytelling and lore), making bush tucker, speeches, a moment of silence for Elders that had passed on, formal signing of the IPA, and lunch.

Leading the ceremony was Senior Elder and Balpara Manager Bulmaniya

Campion (also known as Otto). Dr Campion said that the IPA gives more freedom and recognition to the Indigenous ranger groups who make up ASRAC and who will look after land and sea country properly.

"We are Traditional Owners. We are carers for our country, protecting our story from the very beginning — protecting country, language, our family."

"The ASRAC IPA means we as a ranger family are moving forward," Dr Campion said.

"Having protection for our country and doing conservation work, getting family on their country, doing a lot of monitoring our way — Bininj (and Yolŋu) way, and both ways."

Dr Campion explained that the IPA is about caring for everything that holds culture together. "Now there is a big

recognition for Indigenous groups for land and sea," he said.

"The IPA will provide more capabilities, skills and training so rangers can lead the program."

The creation of the ASRAC IPA follows six years of planning, mapping, meetings and community discussions.

Dr Campion said this IPA means Indigenous people have a voice and will take the lead on country.

"Traditional Owners are protecting our country. Connecting ourselves, because our country needs people, and getting the right people to speak for that country."

This marks a celebration for the whole community. The ASRAC IPA is not just a promise to the land, it's for culture and stories of the Arafura Swamp Region to remain strong for generations to come.

Fighting to clean up sea country

More rubbish is washing up on Northern Territory coastlines than ever before, and most of this rubbish does not come from Australia. Northern Land Council (NLC) rangers and Sea Shepherd Australia have teamed up to help fix this growing problem.

Over the last few years, Senior Numbulwar Numburindi Ranger and Traditional Owner Joanne Pomery has noticed more rubbish on her country. "I became a ranger to protect this country. It really hurts me to see all of this rubbish that wasn't here before," Ms Pomery said.

"This sea country and the animals that live in it tells important stories

about our culture. But our songlines don't talk about rubbish. This is not something we want to pass down to our kids and grandkids."

Rubbish like single-use plastic bottles, shoes, fuel tanks, wooden planks, fishing wire and ghost nets, causes immense damage to sea country and marine wildlife.

Traditional Owners and rangers do their best to patrol and clean up country. But they can't keep up with the tonnes of rubbish.

Sea Shepherd Australia has teamed up with Aboriginal ranger groups in remote areas of the NT and Queensland. Eight Sea Shepherd volunteers from across Australia helped the Yugul Mangi Rangers and the Numbulwar Numburindi Rangers clean up more than 10 tonnes of rubbish from beaches in south-east Arnhem Land.

"It has been fantastic to work with the Sea Shepherd crew, to show people from all over Australia what we are trying to protect," Ms Pomery said.

Grahame Lloyd, Sea Shepherd Australia's Remote Marine Debris Campaigner, said the problem is getting worse.

"Because of the way the tides move, the tonnes of plastic and discarded fishing nets that gather in the Gulf of Carpentaria end up on these really remote coastlines," Mr Lloyd said.

"Unfortunately, many Australians don't understand the extent of the problem or the terrible impact it has on our precious coastal environments and the animals that live in them."

Mr Lloyd said the Sea Shepherd volunteers learnt a lot from the experience: "These clean-ups are about getting as much plastic off the beach as we can. But [it's also] also about our volunteers, who are coming from right across the country to learn from Aboriginal rangers and really understand the issue they are dealing with every day," he said.

Ranger groups like the Yugul Mangi and Numbulwar Numburindi Rangers don't get enough funding to carry out

this urgent and difficult work.

The federal government's \$15 million Ghost Net Initiative has helped 22 Aboriginal ranger groups clean up beaches over the past four years. This important funding ended in June this year and no-one knows if it will be renewed.

Meanwhile, earlier this year, the Northern Territory Government cut the \$12 million Aboriginal Ranger Grant program from its budget.

This program pays for equipment and infrastructure so that ranger groups can protect country and culture.

NLC Chair Matthew Ryan said he was hoping that the NT and federal governments would come to the table on funding this work.

"Our coastal ranger groups are doing really important work – especially when it comes to ghost net retrieval," Chair Ryan said.

"They can't do this work alone, and they have to be funded properly to do it. Everyone loses out if they aren't."



Ranger Sarah Nundhirribala and Traditional Owner Joanne Pomery in Numbulwar.

Marra Traditional Owners launch new ranger program

At the end of September, rangers and Marra families launched the new Marranbala Indigenous Ranger Program. Marranbala Rangers builds on an existing Limmen Sea Ranger Unit, which is part of li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Ranger group who manage the Yanyuwa Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). This now links a continuous Indigenous Ranger Front all along the Gulf of Carpentaria from Arnhem Land to the Queensland border.

The Namultja Aboriginal Corporation invited Numbulwar Numburindi and Yugul Mangi Rangers, along with

project partners NT Parks and Wildlife, Parks Australia, Flinders University and James Cook University, to share

in the celebrations.

The project partners presented to Marra Traditional Owners on progress of projects such as archaeological research, sea grass monitoring, mangrove rehabilitation and sacred site mapping, to make sure that it is led by Marra people, and that marine management works well across jurisdictions.

Marranbala rangers have some great news coming their way.

The new ranger program means that more Marra people can live and work on country, taking on more rights and

responsibilities within the Limmen Marine Park, the Limmen National Park and the Limmen Bight Marine Park.

After a successful consultation with Traditional Owners about the Limmen Marine Park extension, the rangers will soon have more sea country to care for and protect.

And soon, the Marranbala rangers will be able to build their ranger base on the Maria Lagoon outstation, as Traditional Owners have given their consent for the outstation to be recognised as a homeland.



Marranbala Rangers, Marra Traditional Owners and families with Numbulwar Numburindi and Yugul Mangi Rangers and project partners.

\$6 million to continue support for community projects

The federal government will continue to fund the Matched Funding Program, giving Aboriginal groups extra funding and support for community projects.

THE Northern Land Council's (NLC) Community Project and Development (CP&D) program will continue to match funding for community projects, with a \$6 million expansion to the program over the next three years.

This means the NLC's Community Projects team can continue to support Aboriginal groups to use their resources for the benefit of their families, communities and country.

The CP&D team works with Aboriginal groups in all seven NLC regions to support their aspirations. In West

Arnhem, Uwiynmil Traditional Owners are improving their governance skills for their Aboriginal Corporation, and in Darwin Daly Wagait region, Malak Malak are working on having a culture centre built.

Recently, Mangarrayi Rangers have been working with the CP&D team to redevelop their ranger base near Jilkminggan so it meets their needs, as their current ranger base is an old building that was meant to be a meatworks.

Mangarrayi Traditional Owners are investing their royalty money, with additional funds from the Matched Funding Program. They inherited a shed and building, which they have been using as their ranger base for the last few years. Now, they are working on redesigning it so it's well equipped for the rangers.

The group has spent lots of time on the designs to make sure the base is



Mangarrayi Rangers at the ranger base planning to change the design.

functional and has space for the ranger program to grow. In September they hired an architect to work with them, and planned out new offices, ranger accommodation, a vehicle workshop and community spaces.
























They will also include a "keeping place" where Mangarrayi people can access important artefacts, art and

documents.










This is an important project so that Mangarrayi Rangers can care for country and support future generations. With continued funding, the CP&D team can continue to help groups like Mangarrayi rangers to improve community work and living.

THE 111 MEMBERS OF THE NORTHERN LAND COUNCIL FOR THE 2025-28 TERM

DARWIN / DALY / WAGAIT

 JAMES PARRY Daly River	 JOY CARDONA Daly River	 SHIELA WHITE Daly River North (Wootianna)	 JOSEPH PARRY Daly River West (Woodycupatdiya)	 WILLIAM DANKS Darwin
 BILL RISK Darwin	 DEDJA LAUGHTON Darwin	 GRAHAM KENYON Darwin East	 ZOE SINGH Darwin North West	 PHILLIP GOODMAN Darwin South (Adelaide River)
 MARGARET DAIYI Darwin South (Adelaide River)	 CALVIN DEVERAUX Darwin South West (Litchfield)	 RICKY CUBILLO Darwin West (Bulgul)	 JOHN WILSON Peppimenarti	 MONA LIDDY Pine Creek
 ARLOYSIUS NGANBE Wadeye	 MARK TUNMUCK-SMITH Wadeye North	 BARTHOLOMEW NARIJIC Wadeye Outstations 1	 DAVID HEWITT Wadeye Outstations 2 (Delye)	 REX EDMUNDS Wadeye Outstations 3 (Anson Bay)
 LESLEY O'BRIEN Daly River South (Upper Daly)	 VACANT Palumpa (Nganmariyanga)	 MARGARET PERDJERT Wadeye		

KATHERINE

 CHARLANE BULUMBARA Barunga/Manyallaluk	 PRESTON LEE Barunga/Manyallaluk	 DESMOND LINDSAY Bulman	 LISA MUMBIN Katherine	 LAZARUS MANBULLOO Katherine
 TIMOTHY BAKER Mataranka/Djimbra (Jilkminggan)	 JOHN DALYWATER Weemot	 DEANNA KENNEDY Wugularr (Beswick)	 KHALIA BUSH Wugularr (Beswick)	

VICTORIA RIVER DISTRICT

 ANTHEA ANTHONY Amanbidji	 SHADRACK RETCHFORD Bulla	 CARISSA BIRCH Keep River	 LEO YOUNG Lingarra	 BILL HARNEY JNR Menngen
 RAYMOND HECTOR Nitjpurru (Pigeon Hole)	 VICTOR JOHNS Timber Creek	 LORRAINE JONES (DEPUTY CHAIR) Timber Creek	 DION KING Yingawunari	 VACANT Yarralin











WEST ARNHEM

 JUNE FEJO Cobourg	 ROSS GUYMALA Gunbalanya	 WAYNE WAUCHOPE Gunbalanya	 CONNIE NAYINGGUL Gunbalanya	 KERRY MANAGGU Gunbalanya
 JO-ANN CHRISTOPHERSEN Kakadu (Jabiru)	 CORBEN MUDJANDI Kakadu (Jabiru)	 JULIUS KERNAN Maningrida	 MATTHEW RYAN (CHAIR) Maningrida	 JACQUELINE PHILLIPS Maningrida
 REGGIE WURIDJAL Maningrida	 KAREN WURIDJAL Maningrida	 SHANE NAMANURKI Maningrida	 MATTHEW NAGARLBIN Minjilang, Homelands	 JESSIE YANMIR Minjilang, Homelands
 BUNUG GALAMINDA Waruwi	 JENNY INMULUGULU Waruwi, Homelands			

EAST ARNHEM

 NAPUNDA MATTHEW MARAWILI Blue Mud Bay	 BANDAR MICHAEL WIRRPANDA Blue Mud Bay	 SAVANNAH GODARRA Galiwin'ku	 DAVID GANAMBORR Galiwin'ku	 RACHEL DIKUL BAKER Galiwin'ku, Homelands
 RHODA GOLUNG DHURRKAY Galiwin'ku, Homelands	 MARCUS MUNGUL LACEY Galiwin'ku, Homelands	 WESLEY BANDI BANDI Gupuwiyak	 YANANYMUL MUNUNGGURR Laynhapuy Homelands	 WESLEY DHURRKAY Milingimbi
 PETER GAMBUNG Ramingining	 DJAWA YUNUPINGU Ski Beach (Gnyangara)	 BONHULA YUNUPINGU Yirrkala	 ISHMAEL MARIKA Yirrkala	 VACANT Galiwin'ku
 VACANT Gupuwiyak	 VACANT Ramingining	 VACANT Laynhapuy Homelands	 VACANT Milingimbi	

SOUTH EAST ARNHEM

 DARRYN FARRELL Minyerri	 NAOMI WILFRED Minyerri	 SAMMY PONTO Ngukurr, Homelands	 SELINA PONTO Ngukurr, Homelands	 BOBBY NUNGGUMAJBARR Ngukurr, Homelands
 MICHELLE FARRELL Ngukurr, Homelands	 DARRYL NUMAMURDIRRI Numbulwar, Homelands	 ELIZABETH JOSHUA Numbulwar, Homelands	 JUDITH WARD AUGUST Nutwood, Cox River	 SHYANNE WARD Nutwood, Cox River
 CLIFFORD DUNCAN Urapunga	 VACANT Numbulwar	 VACANT Numbulwar		

BORROLLOOLA / BARKLY

 FRAZER BAKER Balbarini	 ARCHIE HARVEY Bauhinia	 SHAUN EVANS Borroloola, Homelands	 WARREN TIMOTHY Borroloola, Homelands	 ROBERT O'KEEFE Brunette Downs
 CHRIS NEADE Elliott	 KIEREN ANDERSON Elliott	 JASON BILL Muckaty	 JACK GREEN North Barkly	 RICHARD DIXON Robinson River
 GORDAN NOONAN Rockhampton Downs (Wogylata)	 JOY PRIEST Wombaya (Lja Mukumparta)	 VACANT Alexandria (Iluwurru)	 VACANT Borroloola, Homelands	 VACANT Borroloola, Homelands
 VACANT Muckaty	 VACANT Murrarji	 VACANT Murrarji	 VACANT Nicholson River North (Nudjabarra)	 VACANT Nicholson River North (Nudjabarra)



Meet your member

NLC rangers take home top prize at environment management awards

IN November, the Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) Conference brought rangers from across the Northern Territory together to network, share ideas and learn. The TNRM is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that works to ensure sustainable management of water, land, soils and biodiversity in the Northern Territory. Four Northern Land Council ranger groups were nominated for TNRM awards, with two of them taking home the big win.

Yugul Mangi Ranger Julie Roy received the Lifetime Achievement Award, while the Malak Malak Rangers won the Research for Natural Resource Management Award with Charles Darwin University's (CDU) Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods (RIEL).

Congratulations to all nominees and winners. We're so proud of all rangers and the amazing work they do on country.

Julie Roy - Lifetime Achievement Award



Ms Roy Roy from Ngukurr joined the Yugul Mangi Rangers in 2001 and is now the Assistant Ranger Coordinator. Over the last two decades, she has earned many certifications and is now one of only two Aboriginal Class

1 Fisheries Inspectors in south-east Arnhem Land. Ms Roy also works closely with young people of Ngukurr delivering various Learning on Country programs and passing on culture to the next generation. For her, winning this award is about family, her community and the future.

"My journey is not for myself, it's for the sake of my family, my community," she said.

"I want to teach our future leaders about threatened and endangered species, and the importance of good research and data collection on country".

Malak Malak Rangers – Research for Natural Resource Management Award

The Malak Malak Rangers manage more than 44,000 hectares of land along the Daly River. As well as fisheries compliance, the rangers look after weed and fire management, sacred site protection and environmental monitoring.

For this project, the rangers worked with CDU's RIEL team to examine the impacts of climate change and water extraction on wetlands in the Daly River Catchment.

Winning the award meant a great deal to the team and Ranger Coordinator Tony Schultz.

"The rangers have been nominated for previous TNRM awards in different categories, but never won before, so emotions were high.

"CDU's RIEL team were great to work with and we look forward to further collaborations in the future."



Malak Malak Rangers and CDU's RIEL team.

From Yirrkala to Katherine Gorge: Outdoor Education Adventure

Yirrkala Learning on Country (LOC) students took an unforgettable canoe trip up Katherine Gorge in Nitmiluk National Park in the dry season. It wasn't just an adventure, it was also about planning, preparation, and teamwork.

On the way, they stopped overnight in Bulman. They spent time with Mimal LOC, visiting Weemol Springs. Local rangers gave them a warm Welcome to Country through a Smoking Ceremony. They also joined Bulman School LOC to collect ochres and do traditional paintings.

The two-day canoe trip up Katherine Gorge was the students' first time using canoes. They worked together to paddle upriver, carry canoes over rocks, set up camp, and cook. Each evening, they wrote about their experience in their journals.

They learnt about a new area, and compared that country with their own: the stories, plants and animals. The trip was challenging but very rewarding. Students returned with new skills, memories, and a deeper connection to country.



Yirrkala Learning on Country students.



Yirrkala Learning on Country students at Katherine Gorge.

Learning on Country Wadeye - Term 3



Learning on Country students hunting for crabs.



Learning on Country students working with the Thamarrurr Rangers.

The first year of the Wadeye Learning on Country Program is going strong.

In term 3, senior students worked with Thamarrurr rangers to build a funeral shelter at Wentek. While gathering small branches and learning to use a power drill, they were honouring a loved community Elder and learning about important cultural practices.

Senior girls worked on a biosecurity project with rangers and staff from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS). They collected and analysed

bird faeces to look for avian flu. The students learnt about collaborative research and why biosecurity is so important.

The Learning on Country program integrates cultural knowledge, scientific learning and community engagement. Students loved spending time on country. They hunted for crabs, searched for turtle eggs, and learnt from Elders. They built skills and supported each other, while also deepening their connection to culture and land.

Territory trailblazer shines in the spotlight



NLC Chair Matthew Ryan with Australian of the Year nominee Jonah Ryan.

When your father used to be the mayor of your community, and is now Northern Land Council (NLC) Chair Matthew Ryan, expectations of you run high. But Jonah Ryan, a proud Bininj man from Maningrida, has carved his own remarkable path by earning a shortlist spot in the 2026 Northern Territory Australian of the Year Awards.

Jonah's journey began as the first ranger dedicated to the NLC's award-winning Learning on Country program. By blending hands-on conservation, marine operations, and the sharing of traditional ecological knowledge, he has guided countless students from the classroom into accredited training and employment.

His approach, merging Western and Aboriginal knowledge — has not only opened doors for young people, but ensured they remain firmly grounded in

culture.

"Sharing my knowledge with the younger generation is the best feeling, as when they get older they will be able to pass that on," Jonah said.

Jonah has boosted school attendance, sparked children's interest in vocational training, and inspired Aboriginal youth to pursue environmental careers.

In October, he celebrated his achievements with his father at the 2026 Northern Territory Australian of the Year Awards.

"I feel so proud. Working with children is the best part of my job."

His influence stretches beyond the classroom, strengthening community ties and preserving cultural knowledge for future generations.





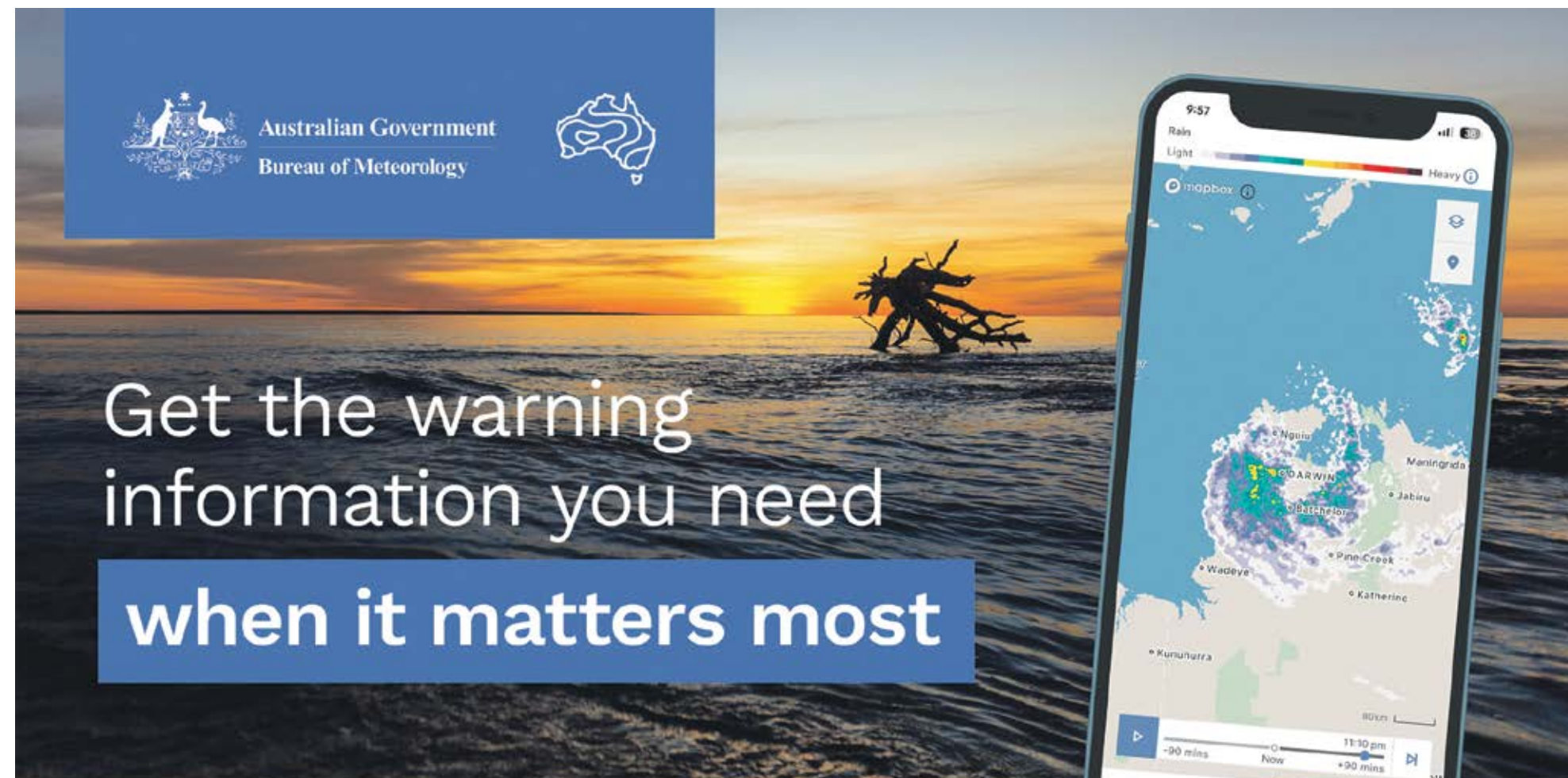
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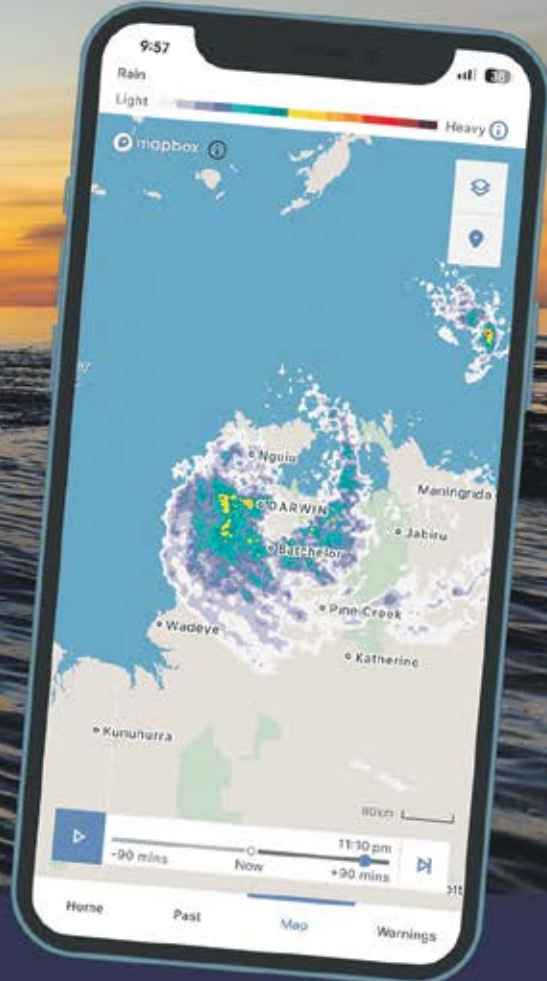
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Lúrra Festival 2025



Lúrra Festival was back for another year, celebrating community spirit, sports, arts, and music in Maningrida.

The Lúrra Festival returned to Maningrida in September bigger and better, showcasing some of the best local fashion, art, sport and music in the West Arnhem region.

Festival-goers were treated to knock-out performances from local legends such as Sunrize Band, Ripple

Effect, White Sand Band, and Wildfire Manwurrk.

Lúrra is a special event co-designed and led by Traditional Owner groups in the region. Lúrra means 'the coming together'. The festival didn't happen for a few years due to COVID-19. But it started again in 2024, and, this year, Maningrida locals and communities nearby were ready to celebrate its second year after the break.

Have a peek at some of the wonderful people and entertainment of Lúrra!

Smoking ceremony at the Lúrra festival, Maningrida.

Yirrkala School wins prize in music competition

YIRRKALA School has won the Best Dance Video Award in Music NT's annual Caring for Country music competition. The Caring for Country category was introduced in 2024, and aims to raise awareness of the importance of biosecurity. Anyone from the Northern Territory, Western Australia or Queensland could enter the competition. There was total prize pool of \$29,500, and the winner of the Best Dance Video got \$2,500.

The song by Yirrkala School is called Caring for Country (Gatapanja) and is a joyful celebration of country with a clear message on the importance of looking after the natural environment. It has dance and music performances from students from years 6-11.

Yirrkala School said making the video was a great learning experience for the students. As they developed the song and made the video, they

thought about what caring for country means to them and their community. Students also developed their dance and music skills.

Congratulations to Yirrkala School!

The competition is a partnership between Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Northern Territory Government, Anima Co and Music NT.



Yirrkala School's winning entry: Gatapanja, Caring for Country.



Christmas in homelands

Santa flew to some very remote places to bring cheer to mob living in homelands.

Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation (Laynha) put Santa on a charter to throw a Christmas party for Garrthlala, Gurrumuru, Donyndji, Gangan, Gutjangan, Dhalinybuy, Yirrkala Rurrangala, Wandawuy and Baniyala homelands in north-east Arnhem Land.



Change in the air for Maningrida sporting community

The Maningrida community celebrated a major milestone in November with the official opening of new changerooms at the local oval.

DELIVERED by West Arnhem Council, and six years in the making, the community celebrated with an opening event, attended by around 300 community members, local, territory and federal representatives and community leaders.

For Maningrida athlete Marlene Cooper, the opening of the new changerooms was an important event. "This has made the community really happy," Ms Cooper said. "Before we had the changerooms, we had to get ready at home, but now we have our own changerooms and this really improved our performance on the field."

In Maningrida, AFL is more than just a sport, it's a way of life – connecting the community, teaching young people important skills and values, and providing opportunities and support, particularly for women and girls in sport.

The changerooms opened just in time for the Maningrida Footy Festival in November.

A highlight of the festival was a return visit by the Sydney Swans, who had last visited in 2024.

The festival was part of the Australian government's Tackling Indigenous Smoking (TIS) program. Participants came from across west



Member for Lingiari Marion Scrymgour, NT Minister Jinson Charles, and West Arnhem Regional Council Mayor James Woods cutting the ribbon to officially open the new Maningrida change rooms.

Arnhem Land to play footy, share food and music and learn about the dangers of smoking.

The competition was both fun and fierce, in true Maningrida style. The men's Maningrida Swans team took

out the title against Milingimbi, and in the women's competition the Maningrida Bulldogs won against the Maningrida Swans.

With plenty of sporting activity happening in Maningrida, including

the 2025/26 AFL season which has just kicked off, the new changerooms will serve as a key hub for sport and community life for many years to come. Watch this space!

Business Grants Round 3 is open!

Aboriginal Investment NT is **now taking applications** for Business Grants Round 3.

Business Grants are designed to:

- Increase the **size, scale, diversity and maturity** of NT Aboriginal businesses.
- Increase the **number of Aboriginal Territories employed** by NT Aboriginal businesses

Resources are available to help you prepare your application. For more information visit:

aboriginalinvestment.org.au/grants

Stop Syphilis in the NT

Syphilis is a sickness you can get from having sex. You might have it without knowing. Tests are private. Treatment is easy.

Get tested

Talk to your health worker or visit your clinic today.

Find more about syphilis.

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Borrooloola Strikers bring soccer back to community and are kicking goals

This year, after a long break, the Borrooloola Strikers women's soccer team was relaunched. Soccer has been popular in the region for many years, due to programs such as the John Moriarty Football Foundation.

In October, the Strikers headed to Dubbo, in regional NSW, for the First Nations Football Festival. The trip was a great opportunity for engagement and understanding leadership, as well as a chance to strengthen skills and compete at a national level. The team, which is part of the new Gulf Youth and Community Service (GYCS) program in Borrooloola and Robinson River, played well. It earned two tough draws against some of the best young footballers from around the country. Well done, Strikers!



Borrooloola Strikers at the 2025 First Nations Football Festival in Dubbo.

Briseis Brittain from Ramingining on track for a bright future



Briseis Brittain at the World Para Athletics Championships in India.

Briseis Brittain, a 17-year-old Ganalbingu and Ndjebbana woman from Ramingining and Maningrida, has competed in the World Para Athletics Championships in Delhi, India.

Athletics NT Executive Leanne Chin is excited for Briseis' future: "The competition pathway for para athletes has never been stronger — not just for 2025 but looking ahead to LA 2028 and Brisbane 2032."

Briseis' participation confirms her status as the first Ganalbingu and Ndjebbana woman from Ramingining and Maningrida to compete at this level. Briseis competed in two events – the 200m and 400m – and

achieved her personal best for both. For Briseis, her next challenge will be competing at the Australian Athletics All School Championships in Victoria in early December 2025. If she does well at these championships, she is on track for possible 2028 Olympics and 2030 Commonwealth Games. We wish her all the very best!



Miny'tji

Land Rights News showcases the work of artists from across the NLC's seven regions on its back cover. This edition features a painting by Bruce Wilfred from Ngukurr, in south-east Arnhem Land.

Artist – Bruce Wilfred
Art Centre – Ngukurr Arts
Community – Ngukurr
Language/s: Kriol, Ritharrngu



Story of the artwork, as told by Bruce Wilfred

Dijan ba main abija totem. en melabat mijimit ola yothu yindi, dhuwa en yirritja. Mela sheya det wanbala dekoreiting, dijan miny'tji na. Miny'tji im wen yu budum detma dot la yu feis.

The artist

Bruce bin bon la Numbulwar en im skin im Burlany. Imin gaman la Ropa gada im femili en dei bin libum im gada im bigwan sista en braja. Dei bin gaman mijamit en imin wandi faindim job.

Bla im abija en gagu, dubala bin artist du. Dei bin meigim baskit and dumbat bak peinting. Imin wandim bulurum hau dubala bin wek en imin wandim peintim koltja said du. Imin

gaman la at senta bla dum lagijat.

Bruce wek gada bafalou hon en im meigim loda irring. Det rarrk stail im yusumbat im bla im dedi en amuri. Dei bin yusum det longtaimwan rarrk ba peintim alabat feis en im ba alabat na.

Im tok weking gada bafalou im brabligudwan en im leigim im job.

This is my maternal grandfather's totem. And we are all one people, Dhuwa and Yirritja. We share that same design, this miny'tji here. Miny'tji refers to body painting, like here when you put the dots on your face.

The artist

Bruce was born in Numbulwar and his skin is Burlany. He came to Ngukurr with his family and they left him with

his older sister and brother. They came together, and he wanted to find a job.

Bruce's grandmother and grandfather were artists who made traditional baskets and did bark paintings. He wanted to follow in their footsteps and paint their traditional culture. Ngukurr Art Centre was where he was able to do that.

Bruce works with buffalo horn to make earrings. The style he uses comes from his dad and grandfather, from the traditional rarrk style they used to paint their faces during ceremonies. It belongs to them.

He thinks that working with buffalo horn is great and he loves his job.