

Traditional Owners must be consulted: NLC condemns Waterfront sacred sites declaration

26 September 2025

The Northern Land Council condemns the decision to add parties to an existing Waterfront sacred site certificate without the proper consultation of Larrakia Traditional Owners.

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) yesterday announced that SHDarwin Hotel and the Darwin Waterfront Corporation have been added as recorded parties to the existing Authority Certificate issued to the Northern Territory Government for the Darwin Waterfront re-development in 2004.

Recent changes to the *NT Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* mean these additional parties can be added to a 20-year-old certificate without proper consultation with Traditional Owners – in this case, Larrakia.

The Waterfront application marks the first use of the NT Government's amendment to the Sacred Sites Act.

The NLC and other Territory land councils have fought hard against these changes, highlighting the risk it poses to the protection and preservation of sacred sites right across the NT.

Larrakia Traditional Owners have expressed their concern time and time again around the SHDarwin design impacting a nearby sacred site.

Plans to build a 47-metre tall hotel at Stokes Hill were not included in the original Authority certificate. Larrakia were not consulted and do not agree with the plans in their current form.

The NLC urgently calls on the Federal Government and the Minister for Indigenous Australians to listen to the Larrakia, condemn the Northern Territory Government and protect this sacred site.

Quotes from Matthew Ryan:

"The decision to add parties to a 20-year-old certificate, without proper consultation of Traditional Owners is exactly what we feared when changes to the Sacred Sites Act were passed through earlier in the year."

"This lack of respect for the wishes of Larrakia Traditional Owners, who have said over and over again they do not support the design plans for this high-rise hotel, is appalling.



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This Territory Government is not listening to us. This is our culture and heritage that they are bulldozing right through. Culture that has been here far longer than they have.

“The Federal Government must intervene in this decision before more sacred sites are put at risk.”