

**Statement – NT Climate Justice Summit
5 and 6 March 2020**

More than 100 participants from across the Northern Territory have gathered in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), on the land of the Central Arrernte people, to commit to transformative actions that respond to the climate crisis and create a just and sustainable future for our communities.

The Summit was attended by Indigenous community leaders, representatives from Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, community sector and other non-government organisations, government, researchers, experts and community members.

We acknowledge First Nations people's connection to country, and commit ourselves to the ongoing struggle to care for country and climate.

The Northern Territory is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Our communities are experiencing prolonged drought, reduced rainfall and extreme heat. People and Country are suffering. Many of our regions are at risk of losing critical drinking water supplies. Without urgent adaptation measures, Territory communities face dislocation as life gets hotter and harder across our regions.

All of these impacts are being experienced with a less than 1 degree increase in average global temperatures, yet the world is on track for significantly greater warming within our lifetimes.

Extreme levels of wealth and resource disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities means First Nations and low-income communities are most vulnerable to these impacts.

The barriers to action on climate change and adaptation are not technical or financial. Instead, it is a failure of political will, bureaucratic inertia and a lack of corporate responsibility that is preventing the Northern Territory from taking decisive action on climate change.

Existing climate initiatives such as caring for country work and the uptake of renewable energy are now threatened by government plans to open new fossil fuel basins for development.

The barriers to climate action must be overcome and climate solutions must be grounded in principles of justice and equity.

Guaranteeing access to safe drinking water and clean, reliable energy for all must be our top priority. We must have investment in our regions for adaptation commensurate to the scale of the crisis.

First Nations communities, long denied citizenship entitlements like appropriate housing and basic services, must be empowered to take control of the opportunities to transform systems that have contributed to the climate crisis.

Across the Territory, the transition to clean energy offers the opportunity to eradicate energy poverty, create thousands of skilled local jobs and power the revitalisation of remote and regional economies. But we must ensure these models don't replicate the approach of fossil fuel companies, and are instead built in genuine partnership with workers and communities to deliver region-wide benefit.

The Northern Territory Government must stop investing in polluting fossil fuel development, and instead redirect and increase public funding to urgent climate adaptation measures.

We commit to collectively respond to these challenges by working in partnership across our communities and civil society groups, centring justice at the heart of all climate solutions.

NT CLIMATE JUSTICE SUMMIT 2020 WORKING GROUP PRIORITIES

Over the course of the two days, working groups identified the following priorities to be taken forward from the Summit:

1. CARING FOR COUNTRY

We acknowledge the connection between country and climate change and the place of Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal communities as central to any solutions. We need to:

- 1) Support and invest in Aboriginal knowledge and practices about caring for country, sacred sites, understanding climate change, the use of bush medicines and more (for example, native bee ecology);
- 2) Enable young people to be on-country, learn about foods and medicine from Elders;
- 3) Maintain and expand the Ranger program including to urban and town landscapes;
- 4) Resource the diversification of Ranger work in response to climate change;
- 5) Develop a regional system to report observed local changes to land national systems;
- 6) Develop alternative economies based on land and its resources;
- 7) Invest in land care, land restoration, people and land connections; and
- 8) Support people to live sustainably in homelands and communities.

2. EMISSIONS REDUCTION

- 1) Introduce a Northern Territory Climate Change Act that:
 - a) Commits the Territory to net zero emissions by 2050 with interim 5-year reduction targets
 - b) Requires the Northern Territory Government to establish a whole of government climate justice and transition plan that addresses health, housing, water, energy and other relevant sectors, and
 - c) Bans new, or expansion of existing, development of fossil fuel basins, fields and infrastructure in the Northern Territory.

3. WATER SECURITY

- 1) Government to legislate a guarantee to safe and reliable drinking water supply for every community in 2020.
- 2) Introduce a Safe Drinking Water Act and amend existing laws to:
 - a) Prioritise drinking/environmental and cultural use of water
 - b) Establish clear accountability for water uniformly across the NT, and
 - c) Access historical data to establish a baseline and monitor NT water use to improve decision making and allocation for ecosystems and people.

4. HOUSING

- 1) Systemic reform of how housing is funded and delivered to enable community control of high-quality new housing and refurbishment that:
 - a) Meets current and anticipates future housing needs
 - b) Is climate safe
 - c) Is embedded in whole of community design, including homelands
 - d) Meets the Housing for Health principles
 - e) Assures access to clean affordable and reliable energy
 - f) Assures access to water that is safe and attractive to drink (potable and palatable)
 - g) Maximises local Indigenous employment and training in every stage of the housing lifecycle.

5. CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

- 1) Rapidly transition diesel reliant communities and homelands to renewable energy, with projects designed to facilitate local capacity building, jobs and ownership.
- 2) NT Government to enable a renewable energy reverse auction process for the main grids. Through this and other mechanisms, require renewable energy developers to deliver sustainable regional and local community benefits and engagement in cost-effective renewable energy projects.
- 3) NT Government to deliver customer-focused grids capable of greater uptake of renewable energy. This includes large scale batteries, demand-side management and central dispatch of ancillary services. Remove barriers to entry of new renewable energy generators.
- 4) NT Government to enact a renewable energy strategy to underpin climate responsibility and just economic development in the Territory (both exports and local development).

6. HEALTH

- 1) Reinstate Community Councils in order to reclaim community control, which is essential for both health and to respond to climate change.
- 2) Ensure health and wellbeing is prioritised in decisions around developments that carry climate change implications.
- 3) Adopt an ecological and culturally determined model for public health that considers direct health impacts (e.g. heatwaves) and indirect (e.g. food and water security).
- 4) Equip health services to address social, emotional and mental health impacts (including adopting an Aboriginal definition and model of health).