

Media Release

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Cape Aboriginal groups call for better representation, major investment in Caring for Country

Traditional Custodians from Cape York Peninsula have written to the parties in the State election, calling for commitments that would bolster their role as traditional custodians for their Country, and allow them to fully exercise their native title rights in land and water.

“We want a new governance arrangement that supports the right of Traditional Custodians to decide on what happens to their family lands, and that takes power out of the hands of self-appointed regional bodies, dysfunctional land and sea centres, and unworkable ‘hybrid’ land trusts” said Donnie De Busch, the Chairman of Nyacha Kumapintha Aboriginal Corporation.

“We are not well served by regional organisations who claim to speak on our behalf. We also have to struggle with Government arrangements that don’t properly reflect our rights, political parties that play favourites, and a native title system that can actually work against Traditional Custodians”, said Mr De Busch.

The group have called for whoever forms Government in Queensland to make a major investment in building Aboriginal land management and governance arrangements in line with the laws and customs of Traditional Custodians of the Cape.

“We are asking that the next Government have a proper conversation with Traditional Custodians, and reshape consultation and negotiation so that the right people can ‘speak for their country’”, said Mr De Busch.

The group want the parties to commit \$46.5m over the next three years to deliver a coordinated investment strategy for Indigenous landholders and entrepreneurs.

Investment would be used to improve governance and representation on the Cape; reform land dealings and the land trust system; and protect their natural and cultural heritage.

The group want traineeships in natural resource and environmental management, an increase in the number of Traditional Custodians working as Indigenous rangers, and remote area infrastructure, such as renewable energy and accommodation, to facilitate their work on country.

“When we have control of our traditional lands, and the resources to manage contemporary demands, we can realise opportunities in the carbon economy, natural resource management and environmental services, and the pharmaceutical industry”, said Mr De Busch. “Our heritage and knowledge is very valuable. World heritage and the tourism industry are part of creating real jobs and sustainable businesses for us”.

The group are also looking for an independent legal fund to be established through which they can obtain legal advice on land dealings, native title claims and other matters. “We can no longer tolerate being badly served on legal matters, and having our rights and interests bundled to suit other people’s agendas”, he concluded.

For comment and further information, contact

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