STATEMENT ON THE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL ART GALLERY

12 October 2018

The Territory Labor Government is progressing development of a National Aboriginal Art Gallery that will deliver significant economic, social and cultural benefits to the people of Alice Springs.

The Northern Territory Government’s preferred site for the construction of the Gallery remains Anzac Precinct, taking in the old Anzac Hill School Site and Anzac Oval. Extensive community consultation has found that 88 per cent of people who engaged in the consultation process either support this site or are site neutral and want us to get on with the project.

We have today written to the Alice Springs Town Council, asking that they now work with us on transitioning this site to one owner, being the Northern Territory Government. We believe that, for this project to be progressed at this site, it is critical that it is treated as a single site with a single owner.

We have informed the Council that the Northern Territory Government is not seeking to enter into further discussion about alternative sites as we believe that this matter has been widely canvassed and considered by the community – firstly via the Expert Steering Committee and then through two rounds of community engagement and consultation.

In making the decision about putting the Gallery at Anzac Precinct, we considered the Expert Steering Committee’s criteria for a cultural institution of this significance, including size requirements, connection to landscape, amenity and accessibility. This decision is also in keeping with significant community feedback that the Gallery is best located in the CBD in order to put Aboriginal art and culture at the centre of the community and to maximise the economic, social and cultural benefits of this project for the people who reside in Alice Springs.

We have reiterated to Council that the master plan for this site will include considerable open green space for events and community enjoyment and ample car parking. We recognise the historic and cultural significance of the site to many local people and this will be reflected in the master plan. The master plan will be developed in consultation with the community. Additionally we confirm the Government's commitment to developing a new home for rugby league and rugby union at an alternative site, subject to transitioning the Anzac Precinct site to one owner, being the Northern Territory Government. We ask that the Council and the rugby codes works with us on developing this new home.

We have also heard clearly from many conversations with Aboriginal stakeholders, that in building an internationally significant art gallery showcasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art from around the country, we also need to do more to elevate and celebrate the voice of the
Arrernte people of Mparntwe. In coming weeks, we will be presenting to the community a range of initiatives that will seek to do that.

It will include establishing a Cultural Community Reference Group, which will help to guide cultural protocols in relation to the National Aboriginal Art Gallery and work with us on better elevating and recognising Arrernte art, culture and heritage within Mparntwe and its environs.

We acknowledge and thank the ongoing support of Councillors for the National Aboriginal Art Gallery to be built in Alice Springs.

We will continue to work with the Alice Springs Town Council in an open and transparent way to transition the site to Northern Territory Government ownership.

Attachment: Letter to Alice Springs Town Council

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Letter to Alice Springs Town Council (pdf 1 mb)