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NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

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Council and residents stance on housing hypocritical, indefensible

Stephen Ryan, Central Region Councillor for the NSW Aboriginal Land Council has accused the Dubbo City Council and some local residents of hypocrisy over its opposition to extension of a home in East Dubbo.

An Aboriginal family currently lives in the four-bedroom, two bathroom home in Cronin Place. The Aboriginal Housing Office is extending the house to six bedrooms and three bathrooms, to properly accommodate the extended Aboriginal family.

The project has been attacked by some local residents and the Dubbo City Council, on the grounds that the State Government has ignored the Council's objections to the extension of the property.

Cr Ryan said the Council's stance – and that of some local residents - was indefensible and hypocritical.

"We didn't see any complaints from the council or a majority of Dubbo residents in 2006 when the state government used its powers to close down West Dubbo," Cr Ryan said.

"And they didn't whinge last year when Rob Borger used his state government powers to block the purchase of a house for this family in South Dubbo.

"They've never complained every time the state government has used its powers to reject an Aboriginal land claim in the region.

"They didn't complain in 1998 when the state government used its powers to reject an Aboriginal land claim on a block near the playing fields because it was 'occupied' by Council. The block is still vacant today.

"They either sit quietly and say nothing, or applaud loudly, when the state government uses its powers to frustrate the hopes of Aboriginal people.

"But they scream blue murder when the same state government uses its powers for the benefit of a single Aboriginal family.

"It's ridiculous, and it's very disappointing. This family has done nothing wrong yet they're being treated like lepers.

Cr Ryan rejected suggestions the issue was not about race.

“This is about race, pure and simple. It’s about the colour of the skin of the tenants in Cronin Place, nothing else.

“One Council official stated publicly that while Council approved the renovations, they did not approve the ‘use’ of the building.

“It’s a house, owned by the state government, and set aside for public housing. What exactly did the Council think the house would be ‘used’ for?

“I hope this family understands that it’s a minority of Dubbo residents and officials acting this way.

“I hope the family doesn’t succumb to the racism and pressure being directed against them.

“If they do then all the blood, sweat and tears our old people have shed in the fight against this sort of discrimination could be a wasted.

“I have Aboriginal, Asian, Maori and Irish heritage, but this type of behaviour within our community makes me want to distance myself from my Anglo-Saxon ancestry.”

“Imagine if Aboriginal people reacted the same way 220 years ago, when the British arrived. Imagine if we said ‘Not in our neighbourhood’.”

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