



MEDIA RELEASE

**PAUL LYNCH MP
MINISTER FOR AGEING
MINISTER FOR DISABILITY SERVICES
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

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Land Rights amendments help drive economies and jobs

Proposed amendments to the State's land rights legislation will help Aboriginal land councils drive economic development and create jobs.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Paul Lynch today introduced amendments to the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*.

Mr Lynch said the amendments would provide clearer and more certain processes for Aboriginal land councils to use when they deal with, dispose of or develop land.

He said the amendments would also deliver more confidence to the property industry when they engage in land dealings with Aboriginal land councils.

"These amendments will encourage greater economic development by Aboriginal communities in New South Wales and create jobs for young people," Mr Lynch said.

"Land assets are critical for Aboriginal communities – not just for the social and cultural benefits they bring – but for the economic benefits they deliver," he said.

The amendments will align all dealings with land – other than acquisition – with community and business plans.

As well, the amendments will require local Aboriginal land councils to pay a Community Development Levy on certain land dealings.

This levy will be paid into a new Community Development Fund that will be used to acquire further land and to distribute loans and grants to local Aboriginal land councils.

Under these amendments, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, as the peak body for land councils, will pay matching amounts to the Community Development Fund.

He said the proposed amendments would also regulate processes, providing certainty for third parties to enter into consultancy or partnership agreements with land councils.

Mr Lynch told Parliament the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* attempted to overcome the historical fact of dispossession.

“The Bill reflects the coming together of both the rights agenda and the economic development agenda,” he said.

“Over the last decade and a half there have been times when various participants in public debates have placed those agendas in opposition to each other,” Mr Lynch said.

“That never made sense to me and is fundamentally illogical. This legislation allows Aboriginal people, through democratically-elected structures, to pursue in ways they choose, appropriate economic development,” he said.

As a result of the Act, New South Wales is the only State in Australia with a democratically-elected structure to represent the interests of its land councils.

The NSW Government and the NSWALC are working together to deliver a \$200 million investment to upgrade water and sewerage infrastructure in more than 60 communities over the next 25 years.

The NSWALC has also established a \$30m NSWALC Education Endowment Fund for scholarships and educational assistance at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

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