



United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples 18th
Session New York, 22 April - 3 May, 2019

Item 14: Future work of the Permanent Forum, including issues considered by the Economic and Social Council and emerging issues.

INTERVENTION by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, delivered by Director Wesley Fernando, member of the Gamilaroi nation.

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council is pleased to contribute to the 18th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. We pay our respects to the Elders and Ancestors of the traditional owners of the land of which we meet, including all other Indigenous peoples of the world here today.

With reference to **Articles 21¹ and 39²** of the Declaration, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council brings the following to the attention of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and make the following recommendations encouraging States to:

- Implement long term national strategies that provide the right to adequate housing on Indigenous lands, these strategies are required to be consistent with or exceed existing international standards concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples; and
- Provide technical and financial assistance to existing Indigenous community controlled organisations that are responding everyday to the crisis of Indigenous housing, this will ensure self-determination through culturally appropriate service delivery to Indigenous peoples.

Madam Chairperson, it is commonly known that “having a secure place to live, is one of the fundamental elements for human dignity, physical and mental health and overall quality of life”³. In Australia, as a result of the historical dispossession and ongoing exclusion from our lands, territories and resources and a deliberate denial of our social and economic rights enacted through successive State policies, Indigenous peoples are disproportionately impacted by housing stress and homelessness. This is evidenced by “...high numbers of households in insecure housing; a high proportion of renters; a high proportion of households in State administered housing; low levels of home ownership;

¹ Right to the improvement of their economic and social conditions

² Right to access financial and technical assistance from States

³ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2005). *Indigenous Peoples’ Right to Adequate Housing: A Global Overview*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/IndigenousPeoplesHousing.pdf>

high levels of homelessness; prevalence of overcrowding; ...living in low socio-economic areas; low-quality housing, housing disrepair; and remoteness⁴. It is clear that Indigenous housing is a national shame that Australia must respond to, with the utmost urgency.

Madam Chairperson, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council understands and recognises the housing crisis that our people are facing. In response, we are taking bold steps to develop a housing capability that will provide secure housing on our traditional lands for our peoples now and into the future. We are working towards securing a future where our peoples move beyond survival to a place where we are culturally rich, politically strong, economically self-reliant and enjoy secure, joyful and fulfilling lives.

In order to realise this envisioned future, States must work in partnership with Indigenous peoples to ensure the provision of culturally appropriate, secure housing. We cannot respond to a crisis of this magnitude in isolation. The need for Indigenous designed and led strategies to improve the social and economic conditions of our peoples is growing every day. It is for the reasons outlined that we urge the permanent forum to focus its future work on economic and social development, with a specific focus on Indigenous housing.

We believe that every person has a right to housing, however we as Indigenous people have a birthright to secure housing on our traditional lands.

Thank you. [628]

⁴ National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Authority (2018) *Submission to the Closing The Gap: Housing as a new target*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalcongress.com.au/advocacy/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NATSIHA-Submission-to-Closing-the-Gap-Housing-as-a-new-target-PUBLIC.pdf>