



United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples

15th Session Geneva, 04 - 08 July 2022

Item 10: Future work of the Expert Mechanism, including the focus of future thematic studies

INTERVENTION by the **New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC)**, delivered by Anne Dennis, for the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, Councillor for the North Western region, member of the Gamilaraay Nation.

The NSWALC of Australia pays our respects to the Ancestors, Traditional Owners and Elders of the lands from which Members are participating from. We also acknowledge all Indigenous peoples and their lands across the globe.

We use this opportunity to address the future work of the Expert Mechanism with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, future pandemics and responses to the rapidly increasing natural disasters, such as bushfire, flooding and drought.

The NSWALC recommends that the Expert Mechanism, States and Governments must prioritise an investigation or study into the:

- Short term and long term impacts of the Governments response to the COVID-19 Pandemic on Indigenous communities.
- Need for community controlled and led management to pandemics and natural disasters
- The provision of resourcing to Indigenous community controlled organisations to lead, manage and support immediate responses and management to pandemics and climate crisis.
- Need to build community capacity through education and training for communities to self-manage and respond to pandemics and natural disasters.
- Acknowledge, respect and adopt Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Management practices when dealing with climate crisis.
- Utilisation and protection of such practices taking into account the need for appropriate Intellectual Property Legislation.
- Lack of adequate culture and heritage laws that preserve and protect and restore sacred sites from natural disasters

- Indigenous peoples rights to participate in the rebuilding and ongoing preservation of their economics and culture and heritage, with free, informed and prior consent.

First Nations Peoples continue to be more vulnerable than other citizens to the immediate and lasting impacts of climate events and other emergencies like pandemics. These events only serve to further enhance existing structures of disadvantage experienced by First Nations Peoples.

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been managing our lands to respond to changing seasons and climates and to ensure we have sufficient protection and nourishment for more than 60,000 years prior to European arrival.

The NSWALC Network is the key vehicle to deliver social, cultural and economic outcomes to Aboriginal communities and is the framework for achieving self-determination in NSW.

As a ready-made system of democratic Aboriginal governance, Government must work with NSWALC and other Peak Aboriginal Organisations to address, respond and manage the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, future pandemics and the rapidly increasing natural disasters.

Always was. Always will be. Aboriginal Land