

David Wood analyses the problems facing the One Mile Dam Aboriginal community, described as “The shame that sits on our doorstep” (Saturday Extra, NT News, June 30).

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In a comprehensive report, David Wood analyses the problems facing the One Mile Dam Aboriginal community, described as “The shame that sits on our doorstep” (Saturday Extra, NT News, June 30). In the 12-page article, Wood reports how the 3.5ha lease has been held since 1979 by an absentee landlord, the Aboriginal Development Foundation, controlled by long-serving office bearer, Bernie Valadian, suggesting that so-called “Aboriginal representative organisations” sometimes act against the interests of those they are supposed to serve.

Wood’s article also suggests federal funds allocated to resolving indigenous disadvantage have been diverted into other projects. And by the way, Dave Tollner, walls of community houses have not been “ripped off” - there never were walls in buildings designed as shelters until occupied by the homeless, grateful for a roof over their heads.

Meanwhile, the Kulaluk leaseholders holding 301 hectares of urban bushland claim that due to lack of funds they have no choice but to sell off their land to developers, at no benefit to the majority of their fellow Larrakia or other urban Aboriginal people.

However, in the Kulaluk case alternate sources of funding are available, simply by declaring the Kulaluk lease to be an “Indigenous Protected Area” (IPA) and thus becoming eligible for the Working on Country indigenous rangers scheme, combined with federal funds for conservation and reforestation available under the IPA program. In this way, the Kulaluk lease could become the prestigious parkland it was meant to be, providing employment through heritage preservation and cultural and educational activities to benefit the Darwin community as a whole.

In both cases, the difficulties are solvable with a bit of imagination and without further alienating Aboriginal land.

Yours sincerely
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