

9/4 Fawcett Court  
Malak  
NT 0810

13 January 2011

The Editor  
NT News  
GPO Box 1300  
Darwin NT 0801

Dear Sir

In the year 2000, Mr Justice Gray of the Federal Court found that the Larrakia people, more particularly the claimants known as 'the Tommy Lyons group', were the traditional owners of the Cox Peninsula under the Northern Territory Land Rights Act of 1976. A decade later, the Federal Government is still considering the historical Kenbi decision, made after over 30 years of litigation.

More recently, Nigel Browne, in his role as Chairman of the Larrakia Development Corporation has justifiably expressed concern that 'many Larrakia have died without seeing their land returned to them' (Letter of the Day, NT News January 7).

In his letter, Nigel Browne suggests the Larrakia Development Corporation is anxious to begin 'the enormous commercial and economic boost' that development of the land would provide once the approvals are given. However, the Land Rights Act requires that traditional owners and others with an interest in the land be consulted. That may not be easy with over 1,600 people now identifying as Larrakia and several organizations purporting to represent them.

Despite the resurgence of Larrakia identity, in Darwin and surrounds I know Larrakia descendants living in poverty in town camps who are not members of and have received no benefits from any of the corporations and associations bearing the word 'Larrakia' on their letterhead.

Meanwhile, Raylene Singh and others of 'the Tommy Lyons group' who successfully argued they were the only 'descent group' with spiritual ties to the land have now reverted to proclaiming in the media and on letterheads to be members of the 'Danggalaba Clan' and Larrakia traditional owners of Darwin, no less.

It is true that in 1979 the Kenbi Claim Book suggested that the Danggalaba Clan are the traditional owners of the Cox Peninsula. Later, in 1997, for strategic reasons the Northern

Land Council chose to put forward a sub-group of the clan, 'the Tommy Lyons Group', as claimants. The decision left the Danggalaba Clan fractured, although continuing to exist as several separate family branches - which in my understanding of a clan is a contradiction of terms.

In summary, my concern is that unrepresentative groups bearing the name Larrakia will legitimize plans to develop the Cox Peninsula in conjunction with a small number of traditional owners while those who have always maintained their Larrakia identity remain marginalised.

Yours sincerely

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