



Media Release

21 November 2018

Mayor slams sport and recreation funding backflip

Barkly Regional Council Mayor Steve Edgington has criticised the Northern Territory Government over a backflip on long-term funding for the region's youth.

The Department of Tourism and Culture advised Council in September it will provide \$224,000 for the delivery of sports and recreation activities across four communities – Ali Curung, Alpurrurulam, Ampilatwatja and Elliott – for 12 months but not Wutunugurra (Epenarra).

“The letter said the Department could not increase the funding amount for 2018-2019 but that it would consider a variation to the agreement for Council to spread the \$224,000 available across all the communities, including Wutunugurra,” said the Mayor.

Mayor Edgington said this contradicted the government's policy to offer five-year funding agreements as part of its 2016 election commitment.

The five-year funding strategy, mainly aimed at non-government organisations, was designed to provide funding certainty, streamline grants administration, allow a greater focus on outcomes, improve strategic planning, and help with retaining and investing in a stable workforce.

“This is disappointing from Council's perspective as the government has clearly departed from its own policy and done a backflip on its election commitment,” he said.

“Although the government states it is committed to working with communities, and is focused on delivering generational change for children and families, investing in our youth, and creating jobs and safer communities, I challenge these statements.

“The government finds money to put into sport and recreation infrastructure in Darwin, such as \$4m to bring the community sports event, the Arafura Games, back to Darwin in 2019 plus \$500,000 a year for 30 years to maintain Warren Park, but it can't find extra funds for young people in a remote community.”

The Mayor questioned how people from remote communities in the Barkly would be able to be a part of the games. “How does a youngster on a community like Wutunugurra aspire to be an athlete or compete in an event like this when the government won't even provide extra funding to deliver sports and recreation activities?”

In July this year Barkly Regional Council CEO Steve Moore and the Mayor met with the Minister for Tourism and Culture Lauren Moss to raise concerns about the lack of funding for sports and recreation activities.

“It is now time for the government to step up and have a good look at what's happening in the Barkly region's remote communities and to start directing funding to where it's actually needed,” the Mayor said.

“Not only will extra funding for sports and recreation in Wutunugurra create jobs, demonstrate a real investment in youth, and promote healthy choices and activities, it will also help make the community safer.”

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