



## SHADOW MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

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Mr Blake Cansdale  
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Via email: [blake@antar.org.au](mailto:blake@antar.org.au)

~~Dear Mr Cansdale~~ *Blake*

Thank you for your letter dated 11 July 2024, outlining ANTAR's priorities for the justice, health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities.

It is our intention to empower communities by establishing genuine partnerships that will ensure that real decision making is focused at the local level to identify and remove impediments so that programs and initiatives are developed and implemented from the ground up. We are on the record as stating that we want Aboriginal people to be part of decision-making processes to address issues such as economic development, housing, health, education, employment and incarceration.

Should we be given the opportunity we will base our policies on the principles of empowerment, self-determination, partnerships, support and mentoring. We intend to establish an ongoing dialogue with community leaders to ensure any changes that are needed are made in consultation and that progress can be tracked. We want to achieve a balance between the rights of traditional owners and the aspirations of communities through providing the tools to strengthen local approaches and make informed decisions.

Aboriginal people know what is best for their communities and should be empowered to decide on solutions that are best suited for their own communities, including housing, health, building a skilled workforce and developing local economic opportunities.

We will empower bush communities through local government reforms designed to return greater community control. We have heard from communities that they have felt disempowered since Community Government Councils were dismantled, and that under big councils they do not have a voice. That is why we will work with communities to co-create a framework that empowers Aboriginal communities that do want a greater say, fostering self-determination and enabling them to have a more active role in decision-making processes. This will not be a 'one size fits all' approach and we won't make changes where large councils are working well and a

number of them are. In areas where communities want change, it may involve clusters of communities coming together to form smaller councils.

We recognise there is an urgent need for intervention into housing across communities. By empowering Aboriginal communities through local government reforms to return decision-making power to them. Aboriginal people can have more control over crucial issues like housing. Our consultations highlight the need for priority in community control, youth leadership, and job creation, aiming to amplify Aboriginal voices that have been sidelined.

Again, thank you for taking the time to provide me with your priorities and if given the opportunity I look forward to working with ANTAR in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Edgington', written in a cursive style.

Steve Edgington MLA

**Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs**

2 August 2024