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 Tabled By: *D. Smith*  
 Signed: *[Signature]*



## MINISTER FOR TREATY AND LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Parliament House  
 State Square  
 Darwin NT 0800  
 minister.uibo@nt.gov.au

GPO Box 3146  
 Darwin NT 0801  
 Telephone: 08 8936 5529

### Yolŋu region LDM Partnership Members:

Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation  
 Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation  
 ARDS Aboriginal Corporation  
 Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation  
 Mikan Reference Group  
 North East Arnhem Land Aboriginal Corporation  
 East Arnhem Regional Council  
 National Indigenous Australians Agency

C/O Partnership Secretariat – Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet

Dear Partnership Members

Thank you all for your commitment to advancing Local Decision Making (LDM) initiatives through the Yolŋu region LDM Partnership Commitment (the Partnership).

The Northern Territory Government's LDM policy is a 10-year plan that seeks to return local decision making to Aboriginal communities by empowering Aboriginal people to determine service and development approaches that work best for their region, community or homelands.

When the Partnership was signed in May 2019, we all agreed to some ambitious goals, especially exploring the Yolŋu and Balanda governance across the region and identifying opportunities to strengthen decision-making and engagement across the region to ensure that Yolŋu leaders and communities can make the most of the Northern Territory Government's LDM policy. The Partnership ran for two years, and has now formally concluded.

I appreciate the efforts of the partners to progress the Partnership. Like so much important work across the Northern Territory, COVID-19 has required us to move at a slower pace at times, and to be flexible and adapt. Members of the Partnership have shown great leadership in finding ways to keep moving forward during this time. I was pleased to hear directly from leaders in Miyarrka about the work they have started, and I have heard more good work is underway in Gatjirrk and Birr Rawarrang. I have also heard that there is strong interest in kicking off LDM negotiations in the sub-regions of Miwatj/Laynhapuy and Marthakal, too.



I want to thank the partners who provided responses to the questions about the future of the Partnership, and those organisations that made submissions to the recent Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into Local Decision Making. While there was no consensus on the future of the Partnership, there are some clear, overwhelming messages:

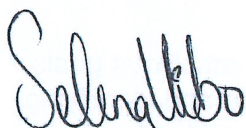
1. bäpurru (clan) and gurrutu structures (Yolŋu kinship) are the source of Yolŋu strength and decision-making processes, and these structures should underpin empowerment and local decision making in the Yolŋu sub-regions; and
2. it is now time to move beyond talking and into action, particularly to negotiate more LDM agreements and take the necessary steps towards meaningful change in communities, homelands and sub-regions.

Now that the Partnership has ended, we can look forward and plan the next steps in the journey towards LDM in the Yolŋu region. I have asked the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet (CM&C) to prioritise supporting sub-regional workshops and negotiations of LDM agreements throughout the rest of 2021 and 2022. These workshops will continue to be facilitated with Yolŋu voices central and strong in negotiations, and determining the right pathways towards agreement making in each place. In the coming years, if there is a strong desire from Yolŋu leaders to negotiate a region-wide LDM agreement, the Northern Territory Government will welcome the opportunity to do so.

I have asked CM&C's East Arnhem Office to liaise with the Yolŋu facilitation team that will support the next stage of workshops to propose some dates for future sub-regional negotiations to be shared with you all. I appreciate that as key organisations working across the region, you will all play an important role in supporting engagement in these meetings.

I am sure that Yolŋu leaders from each of your organisations will continue to share the story of the progress of workshops and negotiations throughout the various sub-regions. If at any stage you have questions or would like to hear more about the work happening across the region, I encourage you to contact Mr Jim Rogers, Regional Executive Director – East Arnhem, CM&C, via email [jim.rogers@nt.gov.au](mailto:jim.rogers@nt.gov.au) or on 0428 058 668.

Yours sincerely



SELENA UIBO

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