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DURRA LARRAKIA DARANIKI INC.

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**Statement by Eric Fejo; Parliament House, Canberra
Tuesday 8 August 2023**

Hello everyone!

My name is Eric Fejo, I am Larrakia.

I have authorised Senator Lidia Napiljarri Thorpe to read my statement.

I want to thank those people who have supported the Larrakia people and who have supported the protection of Australia's natural and cultural heritage. There are good people who have stuck their necks out to protect Larrakia country and to protect Australia's heritage.

A special shout out to the Knitting Nannas; the Darwin people who have campaigned to protect Lee Point, especially the 11 people arrested at Lee Point for blocking the bulldozers; and the countrymen from north-east Arnhem land who supported Larrakia in protecting Lee Point.

The city of Darwin sits over the traditional country of Larrakia people. Today Larrakia country is under threat by the Federal Government, the Northern Territory Government, and a consortium of private capital.

Against the interests of the Larrakia people, the Federal Government are involved in a housing development on traditional Larrakia land at Lee Point for Defence Housing, and they have partnered with the Northern Territory Government and a private consortium to develop a liquified gas and petrochemical plant at Middle Arm.

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Statement by Eric Fejo, Rally at Parliament House, Canberra
DURRA LARRAKIA DARANIKI INC.

3rd August 2023

They have not recognized or respected Larrakia people, nor have they protected the natural environment and they have not genuinely engaged with Larrakia people over these developments.

Twenty-two years ago, when I was experiencing some tough challenges in my life, my mother wrote some beautiful words encouraging me to fight and not quit because even though the road is hard, success will come if you stick to the fight.

Our mothers provide nourishment, and they nurture, support, and protect us. Our mothers do so much for us. Our strength comes from our mothers.

Larrakia country also provides nourishment, and it nurtures, protects, and gives me strength. The land is like my mother. When things get tough, I take time out to listen to my country. It re-energizes me. It gives me life.

Larrakia country is a living ecosystem because if you listen closely to country - the sound of the wind, the waves of the ocean, the trees, and the animals – you will hear what the country is saying.

If you hear the country, then you will understand that people and the natural environment are all organic, a living, breathing entity all connected. Every form of life has a worth and a place in the ecosystem.

We, Australians must have an allegiance to the land, its ecosystems, and the culture that runs through the land. Our natural and cultural heritage is the essence of who we are as people. If we continue to destroy our heritage, then we are nobody and we achieve nothing.

My mother is no longer with us, but I hear her words in the struggle to protect Larrakia cultural heritage and Larrakia country. It is a hard road. However, I along with all of you, have a great responsibility and obligation to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of country, people and communities.

We must live ecologically responsible and sustainable lives. We must protect the life support systems of the Earth, maintain biodiversity, and preserve our natural heritage.

We must prevent toxic or hazardous substances including gases such as carbon dioxide. These gases and toxic substances destroy our land and waters and affect our health and wellbeing.

We must ensure that government and industry prevent the long term and indirect consequences of environmental harm including harm to our culture, health, and wellbeing. They are responsible for the damage to our environment and to our health and wellbeing and we must hold them to account.

Why are governments and industry not able to protect our cultural and natural heritage? Why does Australia still rely on industrial development that destroys cultural and natural heritage? Why can't we create alternative industries that protect the natural environment, the cultural heritage, and the well-being of people?

What are the politicians doing?

I am a Fejo. I am Larrakia. I have always lived on my traditional country; having lived no more than 20 kilometres from where I was born.

I ask you all to support the Larrakia and the people of Darwin and the Northern Territory who want to protect the natural and cultural environment. We must all give back to our mother and protect our future.