



**Rirratjingu
Aboriginal
Corporation**

MEDIA RELEASE

20 March 2026

Statement by Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation Chair WANYUBI MARIKA

Woolworths' early exit plans leave Gove behind

The Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation Board is deeply disappointed and concerned about Woolworths' intention to close its store in Nhulunbuy by the end of June 2027.

We have just returned from a week in Canberra, meeting with Ministers to shore up confidence in the region only to have Woolworths publicly announce that they do not intend to be part of the solution going forward.

People in East Arnhem Land are in a unique and highly vulnerable position when it comes to food security. As a remote region, our only reliable supply route is by barge, which significantly limits access, choice and flexibility. This isolation means there are serious consequences for any disruption to existing food providers.

Woolworths is central to ensuring food security across the Gove region and currently there is no viable alternative in place.

We were assured by Woolworths that they would listen to us, work with us, and consider the voices of our people in their decision-making actions.

Instead, Woolworths has failed to bring us into their conversations. They announced their plan without any meaningful consultation with us, or other regional stakeholders.

Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation will not abandon our people or those in other communities and homelands who will be affected by this decision. Rather, we will harness the demonstrated resilience of the region and lead the development of an effective solution.

We are calling on Woolworths to come back to the table and work with us, along with the Nhulunbuy community, other Traditional Owner groups, and governments. To work with us on developing a fit for purpose solution that serves the interests of all stakeholders.

We have formally invited Woolworths Chair Scott Perkins and CEO Amanda Bardwell to come to Nhulunbuy and meet with us on our home ground so they can better understand the situation we face. To work with us in good faith to achieve an outcome that supports the long-term food security of the region.

We remind Woolworths of their public commitments under their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which they say is driven by their values of “we care deeply”, “we listen and learn”, and “we do the right thing”.

Further, we note Woolworths claims: “Our RAP stays true to Woolworths Group’s purpose of creating better experiences together for a better tomorrow. By moving from safe to brave, and leveraging our collective strengths, we look to address the targets outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, referencing the Closing the Gap 2020 Report. Our vision for reconciliation is an Australia where First Nations peoples have equitable access to the essential products, services and opportunities they need to truly thrive for a better tomorrow.”

These stated values of care and commitment to better outcomes have been fundamentally undermined by the recent approach Woolworths has taken with our community.

ENDS

Media enquiries: media@irratjingu.com