



Northern Land Council
Monthly Newsletter
August 2013

Yirrkala Bark Petition: 50 years on



Yolngu leader and NLC Chairman
Wali Wunungmurra with Prime
Minister Kevin Rudd at Yirrkala.

Picture: Bob Gosford

**NORTHERN Land Council
Chairman, Wali Wunungmurra,
was just 17 years old when he
and elders at Yirrkala put their
names to a petition objecting to
the granting of mining leases
over their land in 1963.**

The petition, framed in traditional bark painting, was sent to Canberra where it was received on August 14, 1963.

The unprecedented move confused the Parliamentarians of the day and they refused to believe it really came from the signatories.

Angry at this, the Yolngu made another bark petition and that one was received in Canberra two weeks later on August 28.

Finally realising they meant business, what followed was high-level moves to assist the people of North East Arnhem Land in their fight to be heard.

It actually began the land rights movement in Australia, and would

later lead to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act being implemented.

Fifty-years on, that fight was celebrated at Yirrkala where people from all over the country converged on Rika Park.

Among them was Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, NT Senators Warren Snowdon and Nigel Scullion, many people from the public service, community people and relatives of the original signatories.

Bootu Creek decision

THE Northern Land Council (NLC) has welcomed the decision by the Darwin Magistrates Court in finding OM Manganese (OMM) guilty of desecrating a sacred site.

OMM was found guilty by Magistrate Sue Oliver of one count of desecrating and one count of damaging the Two Women Sacred Site that was within the boundaries of its Bootu Creek manganese mine 170km north of Tennant Creek, and was fined \$150,000.

NLC Chairman, Wali Wunungmurra, said protecting and respecting sacred sites should be a priority and should not happen in the first place.

“Although traditional Aboriginal owners are deeply upset they are relieved the decision went the way it did,” Mr Wunungmurra said.

“This landmark judgement should trigger change throughout the mining industry, with companies taking much more caution and showing greater respect regarding Aboriginal heritage.”

Mr Wunungmurra welcomed OM Manganese Ltd’s expression of sincere contrition.

“To its credit, the company has worked to rebuild trust with

traditional owners since the desecration including in private meetings,” he said.

“The NLC looks forward to continuing discussions with a view to securing an ongoing and positive future relationship between OM Manganese Ltd and the traditional owners.”

Barunga goes off with a bang!

IT was regarded as the best ever, and by the looks on the faces of the more than 3000 people over three days in June who attended the Barunga Festival, one would have to agree.

The 28th edition of the iconic festival, regarded as Indigenous Australia’s largest and longest-running arts, sports and culture event, had it all

From the opening day’s spear-throwing competition to riverside theatre, there was something for everyone.

This year, the festival was organised by Skinnyfish Music, whose hard work saw what was a smooth-running and enjoyable festival.

One of the highlights was the appearance of world-renown musician, Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, whose music has touched the world.

With a voice that captures the spirit of his ancestry, Gurrumul played a set of songs from his solo albums Gurrumul (2008), Rrakala (2011) and from his days with Saltwater Band.

Gurrumul was later joined by John Butler, who had earlier played a 45-minute solo set.

Sharing the stage were other iconic Aboriginal bands, including Sunrize Band, The Lonely Boys, Mambali Band, Tjupi Band, The



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Yugal Boys, Sandridge Band,
Band-T Band, and B2M.

Sport was played and there was plenty of action on the football field, the basketball courts and the softball pitch.



The Sunrise Band and traditional dance at Barunga Festival.

Pictures: Bob Gosford

Daniel voted the best apprentice



Daniel Bromot with his NAIDOC award in Perth.

Picture: NAIDOC.org.au

YOLNGU man Daniel Bromot's dedicated work ethic led to his being awarded the National NAIDOC Apprentice of the Year award at the NAIDOC Ball in Perth in July.

Daniel is a boiler and turbine operator at Pacific Aluminium's power station at Melville Bay, near Nhulunbuy, in North East Arnhem Land.

Part of the 34-year-old's job is to keep the water and power supply going and it is a role he relishes. Beginning his career in mining in 2009, Daniel completed the Advanced Boiler and Turbine Operations ticket.

Joining forces to fight Mimosa

A TEAM of experts from the Department of Land Resource Management's Weed Management Branch recently teamed up with Traditional Owners to conduct biocontrol surveys of the Daly, Wagait and Finnis regions in the fight

against the highly invasive weed, Mimosa (Mimosa pigra).

Mimosa, native to Mexico and South America, is considered one of Australia's worst weeds with the potential to spread over most of the wetlands in northern Australia.

The Territory NRM-funded bio-control project started in 2007 and works in collaboration with Indigenous ranger groups Bulgul, Wudikapildiya and Malak Malak to assess the health and undertake eradication strategies in affected areas.

The recent survey covered approximately 6000 square kilometres, encompassing areas of the Daly River, Port Keats and Finnis River Aboriginal Land Trusts and six pastoral properties.

Meeting the CM in Katherine



NLC Executive members Samuel Bush Blanasi, Dhuwarrararr Marika and Bill Risk with NT Chief Minister Adam Giles at the Katherine Show.

MEMBERS of the Northern Land Council Executive met with NT Chief Minister during an impromptu and informal meet-and-greet at the Katherine Show in July.

Samuel Bush Blanasi, Bill Risk and Dhuwarrararr Marika met Adam Giles briefly at the NLC's show display.

Mr Risk took the chance to speak with Mr Giles about the Kenbi land claim.

The pair had spoken previously before about the claim which is three decades old.



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According to Mr Risk, Mr Giles promised follow-up talks and at the show he told him that “things are progressing and are coming along quite well”.

Buffaloes culled to protect country

WORK on reducing the numbers and damage to country by buffaloes continues with a cull in the Arafura Swamp near Ramingining.

A total of 3700 of the introduced species were shot in work carried out by NLC ranger groups over a one-week period in November last year.

Buffaloes were introduced in Australia in the 19th Century, specifically between 1825 and 1843.

The original shipment of buffalo imports numbered around 80.

By the 1980s, their numbers reached a high of an estimated 350,000.

Despite the BTEC programme in the early 1990s their numbers are believed to be around the 80,000 mark.

The damage to country by buffaloes has been an ongoing issue in delicate environmental areas, like wetlands, for some time.

In the Arafura Swamp near Ramingining, Traditional Owners

of the area sought to have their land and swamp lands protected.

The Northern Land Council’s ranger group programs, Gurruwiling Rangers, and Wanga Djakamirr Rangers, together known as the Arafura Catchment Rangers, were engaged for the cull.

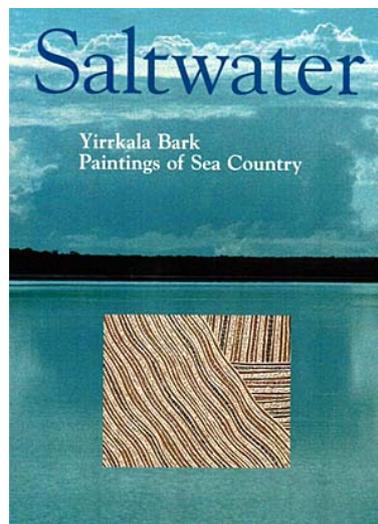
The ranger groups comes under the NLC’s Working On Country program.

If left unchecked, buffaloes will increase in population and will change the unique biodiversity of the swamp lands and desecrate sites of significance and traditional food sources.

The cull is primarily a land management issue.

But also at risk are the crocodile breeding habitats.

New, updated edition of Saltwater book



New edition coming soon.

THE Northern Land Council has sponsored a re-print of a book that played a key role in the High Court’s 2008 decision known as the ‘Blue Mud Bay’ case.

First printed in 1999, the book, called Saltwater – Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country, traces

the history of the traditional art form of bark painting.

During the High Court hearings, the book and the work it contains, was used by legal counsel to argue how sea rights for the Yolngu was just as important as land rights.

In its own right the publication is a permanent record of the traditional art and the artists’ work, with meaning and Dreaming attributed to each piece.

Full Council ratifies land use agreements and exploration applications

THE Northern Land Council’s 106th Full Council Meeting, held at Timber Creek in June, saw discussions on a number of key issues together with NLC policy direction during the five-day meeting.

Full Council refers to the 83-strong membership of the Northern Land Council and its constituents across the organisation’s seven regions: Borroloola-Barkly, Darwin-Daly-Wagait, East Arnhem, Katherine Region, Ngukurr Region, Victoria River District and West Arnhem.

The NLC has offices in each of those regions staffed by qualified local people.

At Timber Creek, Full Council ratified 36 land use agreements and five mineral exploration applications, the details of which remain commercial in-confidence.

NLC and Full Council also welcomed special guests the Minister for Indigenous Health, Senator Warren Snowdon and Opposition spokesman for



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Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion. Presentations were made by the two including a question-and-answer session with members. National media also attended.

NLC Chairman, Wali Wunungmurra, later endorsed Senator Scullion's comments of the Council's place in the Top End landscape.

Mr Scullion commended the professionalism of the NLC and said recent talk of breakaway land councils was impractical.

"I don't think 40 land councils would be ideal; the fact that you speak as one as the Northern Land Council is a strong part of what you do," Senator Scullion said.

"I'm very clear about this. My personal view is that the Northern Land Council is doing a great job."

While presenting encouraging statistics on the improved rate of Indigenous people's health in the Top End, especially among the young, Mr Snowdon said there was much to do to improve the health of Indigenous Territorians.

FCMs are held twice a year and are preceded by seven Regional Council Meetings.

Dates for Regional Council Meetings

THE NEXT ROUND of Regional Council Meetings have been set, venues are yet to be confirmed.

Darwin/Daly/Wagait **19-23 August**

West Arnhem **11-12 September**

East Arnhem **18-19 September**

Ngukurr, VRD and Katherine (combined) **1-3 October**

Borrooloola/Barkly **16-17 October**

Reminder 2013-2016 NLC Full Council Nominations

REMINDER nominations are now open for the next 3 year term.

Under Section 29 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* the Minister for Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has approved 52 community areas, within our region, from which 78 members and 5 co-opted women members are nominated to represent Aboriginal landowners and community residents at formal Northern Land Council meetings.

Choosing your Representative

The Minister also determined that local organisations **with a broad base of community support** may be requested by the NLC to assist in the nomination process for membership of the Full Council.

Nominations should be made by participating organisations by completing the *Full Council Nomination Form* contained in NLC's Nomination Information Kit.

It is important when participating organisations are completing the *Full Council Nomination Form* that traditional owners and Aboriginal residents in the community are notified of the

nominations process and that they have an opportunity to have a say over who their member should be.

The NLC may assist participating organisations with the expense of advertising meetings to determine nominations.

Who Can Nominate?

Nominated Full Council representatives of each community area must be traditional owners of land in that community area, or be an Aboriginal person who is a permanent resident in the community area.

People nominated are required to have a good knowledge of land and sea right matters as well as local community issues.

Nominations close on 30 August

It is important for administrative reasons that nominations are received well in advance of the November Full Council Meeting.

To assist this process, the closing date for nominations is the 30th August 2013.

When completed the *Full Council Nomination Form* must be sent by fax to 89452615 or given to the regional office by that date.

Next Full Council Meeting

The newly nominated members will receive letters inviting them to attend their first Full Council Meeting which will be held in November 2013. At this meeting members will nominate and vote for their Region's Executive Member, Deputy Chair and Chair for NLC.

For further advice about the selection process please phone Sheree Ah Sam on 8920 5118, Syd Stirling on 89205113 or contact your regional office.

For media enquiries contact Darren Moncrieff on 89205114