



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

MOUs smooth explorers' path in Top End

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The Northern Land Council's Chief Executive, Norman Fry, today announced that the Northern Land Council has brokered exploration agreements covering about 80 per cent of the native title land in the Northern Territory's Top End that is subject to exploration licence applications.

Building on a ground-breaking agreement finalised with Rio Tinto in February covering some 31,000 square kilometres of native title land, the NLC has now cemented further deals that have the potential to speed up the ELA process on more than 100,000 sq km of non-Aboriginal land in the NLC's area.

Exploration on non-Aboriginal and pastoral land has been significantly slowed by the previous NT Government's refusal to process ELAs for more than four years. As a result the NLC has been working with key exploration companies to negotiate template regional agreements which will significantly reduce timeframes and costs for both the Land Council and the exploration companies.

The biggest of the new agreements was put in place by a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the NLC and De Beers Australia Exploration Ltd on 22 May, establishing a procedure for dealing with ELAs on 57 of De Beers' tenement applications covering 82,833 sq km.

Similar agreements have also been signed over the past month with Tawana Resources NL and Bootu Creek Resources Pty Ltd.

"These latest agreements are more evidence of the effort the NLC is putting in to help the mining industry in the Northern Territory," NLC Chief Executive Norman Fry said. "Despite comments from some quarters that land councils are development-averse, here we are clearing up an exploration licence backlog bequeathed to us by the former conservative NT regime."

John Sumpton, New Business Manager for De Beers Australia Exploration, commented: "We recognise that traditional owners and their representative bodies are important stakeholders in our business. We see agreements such as this facilitating early stage exploration and building relationships for the future."

The template agreements provide for protection of sacred sites and cultural areas; protection for the environment; consultation with traditional owners; compensation in the form of community benefits regarding exploration; and parameters for any future mining agreement should exploration prove successful.

Under this process, native title holders retain the right to negotiate agreements outside the template parameters if they so desire.