



# Northern Land Council

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Statement re the NT permits system by Galarrwuy Yunupingu, AM, Chairman

**19 November 2002**

Over the past week there has been much comment in the national press regarding the permit system operating on Aboriginal-owned land in the Northern Territory.

The permit system exists for a reason: to recognise Aboriginal people's right to decide who can and who cannot enter their lands. The power to grant access rests in the hands of traditional owners and not in the hands of non-Aboriginal bureaucrats, as has been alleged in the Northern Territory media.

As the 'father of land rights', Sir Edward Woodward, told the landmark 1999 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Reeves Review of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act*: "For Aboriginal people not to have the capacity to control entry onto their lands, he believed, would have made a mockery of land rights."

At the Northern Land Council's recent Full Council meeting, members unanimously passed a resolution calling on all media outlets to implement cross-cultural training for all media staff working on Indigenous issues. Members further stated that the training should include information on local protocols and legislation to guide their behaviour.

The Northern Land Council, in consultation with traditional owners, will shortly be writing to news editors and chiefs of staff to open up a dialogue regarding the reporting of issues in Top End Aboriginal communities.

Such dialogue between the Land Councils and the media will provide an opportunity to negotiate so that matters of public interest may be investigated and receive public scrutiny – without compromising cultural or personal concerns.