



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

An inclusive future is the challenge: Yunupingu

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Northern Land Council Chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu says the Northern Territory must embrace its Indigenous history and make its Indigenous people genuine partners in every aspect of its social and economic future if it is to succeed in its twin goals of generating broad-based economic development and achieving statehood.

In a speech delivered at Northern Territory University on his behalf by NLC Chief Executive Norman Fry, Mr Yunupingu said that any partnership developed had to be inclusive and based on mutual understanding, respect and acceptance.

“The greatest opportunity to trial this approach is here, in the NT, where a sustainable future depends on us working together, sharing our skills and resources,” Mr Yunupingu said in his address on day two of the Charles Darwin Symposium *Beyond the frontier – sustainable futures for north Australia*.

“The Territory is the ideal place for new approaches to governance and decision-making, because here we have had the extraordinary benefit of nearly 30 years of recognition of our law through the Land Rights Act.”

With nearly all the major developments in the NT taking place on Aboriginal land – the railway, gas pipelines, major mines and other such developments – Mr Yunupingu said he believed the time was right to work towards a sustainable future.

“A truly sustainable economic future is built on sustainable political, legal and constitutional structures that reflect the unique cultural values of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians.”

Education and capacity building are also critical to the success of the Territory in the future.

Mr Yunupingu pointed to the example of the NLC’s Caring for Country Unit, which through collaborative arrangements with government and non-government institutions was putting in place a comprehensive land and sea management plan that was already delivering real jobs and training for Aboriginal people on their land.

“The Land Councils are currently engaged in ground-breaking discussions with the NT Government about the ownership and management of our national parks,” he said. “This is a difficult task and will be an important test for all of us but, if we succeed, it will be an important milestone along the way to a genuinely sustainable future for the Territory.”

Mr Yunupingu said another issue yet to be addressed was that of Chief Minister Clare Martin’s renewed push for NT statehood, which he acknowledged had been greeted with “some fear and trepidation” by Aboriginal people.

“Much more is needed before Aboriginal Territorians can vote to support statehood,” he said. “Most crucially, the process of the development of a constitution must be undertaken in an inclusive and collaborative way.”