



Northern and Central Land Councils MEDIA RELEASE



Land Councils welcome NT Government announcement on Parks

19 September 2003

The Northern and Central Land Councils today welcomed the announcement from the Territory Government regarding the framework for resolving matters relating to Territory parks and reserves. This framework is a significant step towards a mature and inclusive land management system.

“The Land Councils and Territory Government have worked hard to settle on a framework which will produce a world class parks system,” CLC Director, David Ross, said today. “This framework goes a long way towards achieving these aims.”

“After months of working through the details, we have finally reached a point where the offer can now be put to traditional landowners. At the end of the day traditional landowners will make their own decision about whether or not to accept this offer regarding the ownership and management of national parks and reserves”.

NLC Chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu said: “In the past, national parks have been used to thwart land claims and further dispossess Aboriginal people. This offer signals the start of a new way of dealing with conservation and land issues in the Northern Territory. For the first time, there is recognition of the importance of cultural heritage issues, and the crucial role that Aboriginal people can play in managing and promoting Territory parks.”

“We have seen how well the arrangements have worked at Nitmiluk. We have tried to build on this experience and propose a new joint management structure which will give Aboriginal people a real role in decisions about the parks, and also ensure that day-to-day management occurs in a timely and efficient manner. The new arrangements look very promising.”

“We are also very pleased about the explicit commitment to Aboriginal employment and economic development as an intrinsic part of an effective parks system.”

Mr Ross said: “There remain some issues which have not been resolved to the satisfaction of the Land Councils. These issues will be discussed with traditional landowners, and will no doubt influence whether or not they agree to accept the offer from the Territory Government.

“This offer is on the table now and we will be holding consultations with traditional owners for each park between now and June 2004.”