



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

Capacity building high on Full Council agenda

24 October 2003

NLC Chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu today said the organisation's 85th Full Council Meeting had been among the most successful he had attended, with consent given to a substantial number of land use agreements and new exploration licence applications (ELAs).

"We are continuing to make good progress towards our goal of economic independence for Aboriginal people living in remote areas of the Top End," Mr Yunupingu said.

"As I have said many times in the past, we must build the capacity of our people and our communities to make best use of the opportunities that come our way. That is why I was particularly pleased that Council members supported Batchelor Institute's proposal to build two new study centres at Gunbalanya and Borroloola."

"Subject to the final consent of traditional owners, these centres will operate along the same lines as facilities already successfully established at Ngukurr, Maningrida and Minjilang, providing the opportunity for students to remain in their own communities while they pursue their studies."

The Full Council Meeting, held on 20-24 October in Katherine, also consented to five ELAs covering a total area of some 4,400 square kilometres in the Katherine and West Arnhem regions.

Other agreements to win consent included:

- five Land Use Agreements covering automatic weather stations and proposed infrastructure developments by Telstra and NT Power & Water;
- a renewal and extension of Gunbalanya Meat Supply's existing lease and grazing licence area;
- a new tourism-related land use agreement in the Daly River region;
- a new native title pearling agreement covering sea bed areas near Croker Island;
- a renewal and extension of Fitzroy Aboriginal Corporation's existing land use and agistment agreement over Fitzroy Station and adjacent areas.

Council members were also updated on the progress of a number of major projects either taking place or planned for the Top End, including the Wickham Point gas plant, the expansion of Alcan's bauxite operations in Nhulunbuy and the gas pipeline from Wadeye to Nhulunbuy.

"Sustainable development in the Top End offers enormous economic opportunities to Aboriginal people and the NLC is committed to ensuring that our constituents gain long-term benefits from this process," Mr Yunupingu said.