



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

NLC welcomes final settlement of Ward case

9 December 2003

NLC Chief Executive Norman Fry today welcomed the finalisation of a consent determination flowing from the long-running Ward case, in which the Miriuwung, Gajerrong and other peoples sought native title over an 8,000 square kilometre area in the East Kimberley region straddling the Northern Territory-Western Australia border.

“After nine years and the expenditure of many millions of dollars, we finally have a resolution that will remove the need for any further litigation,” Mr Fry said.

In August 2002 the High Court found that native title could co-exist with pastoral and mining leases and in National Parks. However, it also said some issues required further consideration by the Federal Court.

The agreements reached on both sides of the border mean an end to litigation and bring certainty for all stakeholders in the area. In the NLC’s area, the consent determination will allow the Miriuwung people to exercise their rights in Keep River National Park.

“The determination allows traditional owners and other stakeholders to now work towards a cooperative and constructive relationship for the future,” Mr Fry said.

“This is a good day for the traditional owners and all Territorians.”

The determinations were handed down in a ceremonial Full Federal Court hearing in Kununurra this morning, which was attended by traditional owners, politicians and representatives of both the Northern Land Council and the Kimberley Land Council.