



# Northern Land Council

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Blue Mud Bay case a win for traditional owners**

**2 March 2007**

The Northern Land Council (NLC) has welcomed today's announcement in the Federal Court in Darwin granting exclusive access of the intertidal zone and tidal rivers above the low water mark of Aboriginal freehold to traditional owners of the Blue Mud Bay region in north east Arnhem Land.

"Today is a landmark day for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory," NLC Chief Executive, Norman Fry said.

"After over 30 years of struggle the exclusive rights of traditional owners have finally been recognised regarding commercial fishing in the intertidal zone and tidal rivers above the low water mark."

"The decision applies to over 80% of the Northern Territory coastline, since Aboriginal land has been granted as freehold to the low water mark of the coastline since the 1970s," Mr Fry said.

"This means that there must now be a comprehensive settlement with the commercial fishing industry regarding fishing in the intertidal zone and tidal rivers."

It is expected that the NT Government and fishing industry will seek leave to appeal the decision to the High Court, and all parties have consented to a stay of the decision so that rights may be finally determined.

"If the decision is upheld in the High Court the NLC will grant a 12 month amnesty in favour of the status quo to allow commercial fishing to continue - thus allowing an ordered transition to a negotiated outcome", Mr Fry said.

"Traditional owners aim is to become a stakeholder in the fishing industry and ensure that it prospers - not to close it down."