



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

Blue Mud Bay case: commercial fishing protected

16 March 2007

The Northern Land Council (NLC) Chief Executive, Norman Fry, has confirmed that the NLC is working closely with the NT Government and the NT Seafood Council to ensure commercial fishing in tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land pending the outcome of a High Court appeal.

“The NLC expects to issue interim licences under the *Land Rights Act* regarding commercial fishing in the intertidal zone and in tidal rivers of all Aboriginal land in its region next week,” Mr Fry said.

“The issue of interim licences is necessary to preserve the status quo, given the Federal Court's decision today that it has no power to suspend its decision in the recent Blue Mud Bay case that the NT Government's fishing licences do not apply regarding Aboriginal land.

“These licences will be on the same terms and conditions as the Government's licences, will have no fee, and will automatically be issued to all current commercial operators,” Mr Fry said.

“The licences will expire after the High Court determines any appeal.”

Mr Fry confirmed previous advice that if successful in the High Court the NLC will implement a similar process to ensure an amnesty of least 12 months in favour of the status quo to allow commercial fishing to continue - thus allowing an ordered transition to a negotiated outcome.

“The good faith shown by the NLC, and all parties, in promptly issuing interim licences means that the public can be confident that success in the High Court will lead to a win-win outcome - with commercial fishing continuing to prosper with the involvement of traditional owners,” Mr Fry said.