



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

Blue Mud Bay case: interim licensing scheme

2 April 2007

The Northern Land Council (NLC) Chief Executive, Norman Fry, has announced that agreement has been reached with the NT Government and the NT Seafood Council as to an interim licensing scheme which ensures commercial and recreational fishing in tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land pending the outcome of a High Court appeal.

“Both commercial and recreational licences will be free, will apply to all tidal waters over Aboriginal land, and will expire 2 months after the High Court determines any appeal,” Mr Fry said.

“Commercial licences will be automatically granted to all commercial operators, and be backdated to 2 March 2007 (the date of the Court’s decision).”

“Recreational licences will be granted to all persons who make an application, and need only be applied for once,” Mr Fry said.

“A postal/fax/online system will be implemented this week for applications, in conjunction with widespread publicity to stakeholders.”

“However recreational fishers have until 31 May 2007 to lodge an application, which will be backdated to 2 March 2007,” Mr Fry said.

“This means that Territorians and interstate visitors can enjoy their Easter fishing weekend and events such as the NT Barramundi Classic in early May, in full knowledge that they can obtain a backdated recreational licence after the event.”

“After 31 May 2007 recreational licences will be valid from the date of application, meaning that Territorians can make an application by post or on line on the Friday evening before a weekend fishing trip - and receive a valid recreational licence for that weekend after the event,” Mr Fry said.

“Each licence is subject to conditions that the requirements of the *Fisheries Act* is observed.”

“A licence does not authorise entry to sacred sites in tidal waters, closed seas, or give a right to cross Aboriginal land to access tidal waters - a separate permit is required for these purposes.”

If successful in the High Court the NLC will implement a similar amnesty of at least 12 months to allow commercial and recreational fishing to continue - thus allowing an ordered transition to a negotiated outcome.

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

Further information is available in the attached commercial and recreational fishing fact sheets.