



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

NLC wins human rights award

10 December 2007

Northern Land Council (NLC) Chairman, Mr Wali Wunungmurra, has welcomed the award to the NLC in Sydney today of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Community (Organisations) Award.

"This award recognises 30 years of dedication and achievement by past and present members of the Full Council and staff in progressing Aboriginal rights," Mr Wunungmurra said.

"The award is part of a momentum for change which commenced with the 1963 bark petition of which I am the last surviving signatory."

"The bark petition led to many landmark achievements including the 1967 referendum, the 1976 Land Rights Act, the Mabo decision, and last week's High Court hearing of the Blue Mud Bay sea rights case," Mr Wunungmurra said.

"I am proud of these outcomes, and look forward to working with the next generation of Aboriginal leaders and all Australians to advance Aboriginal rights and eliminate discrimination."

In his speech Mr Wunungmurra criticised the failure for over 30 years by both the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments to provide equal services in Aboriginal communities, particularly for education, housing, employment and police, which he described as "a form of discrimination".

Mr Wunungmurra emphasised that the NLC generally supports the Commonwealth intervention in the Northern Territory as the best means of remedying these failures, but made pointed criticisms of the approach of the former Minister Mal Brough which he said had breached Commonwealth law and had "proceeded without consultation in a manner intended to polarise the community for political purposes" and left a "mess" which others now had to "clean up".

"I look forward to working with the Prime Minister, the Northern Territory Government, and all Australians including in relation to the intervention to make a better future for all," Mr Wunungmurra said.