



Northern Land Council

MEDIA STATEMENT

Aboriginal people entitled to live on their homelands (outstations)

23 December 2008

In its submission to the Northern Territory Government's Outstation policy review, the Northern Land Council (NLC) has unequivocally expressed its full support for Aboriginal traditional owners who wish to live on their homelands.

The NLC's Chief Executive, Mr Kim Hill today said that Aboriginal people have a right to choose where they wish to live and are entitled to the same level of service provision as every other Australian to ensure a reasonable standard of living.

"Aboriginal people started returning to their traditional homelands more than 30-years ago because they knew then - as they still know now - that it is a better option than living on the fringes of major towns," he said.

"Homelands give Aboriginal people a sense of "home" and a sense of belonging while contributing to their cultural responsibilities of caring for their country and managing the natural resources of their land and seas.

"It is also well documented that homelands contribute significantly to Aboriginal people's overall health, well being – and importantly to their thriving art practise and industry which provides an economic base when none other exists - and these factors must be the major considerations in any government policy formulation.

"The NLC submitted to this review that any dysfunction within the Aboriginal community has largely been caused by neglect and a failure to provide adequate resources for basic services including education, health, housing, police and local government by both the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments over the past 30-years or more.

"We also submit that the provision of services to homelands is essential to *Closing the Gap* and ensuring reasonable living standards for Aboriginal people.

"So we encourage the government to seriously consider all these issues, continue talking to Aboriginal people, and to take responsibility for its part before making any final decisions."

Ends.

Media contact: Ursula Raymond – 0438 954 049 or 08 8920 5114