



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

McArthur River traditional owners disillusioned by Federal Court decision

13 June 2008

Northern Land Council CEO, Mr Kim Hill has today expressed disappointment at the Federal Court's decision that the approval by the former Federal Environment Minister, Ian Campbell could not be challenged.

"The traditional owners are disillusioned by the legal and political process – they won this matter in the Northern Territory Supreme Court in April last year – only to have their rights trampled on by the NT Government's overriding legislation allowing MRM to proceed to open cut mining," he said.

"There was a lack of due process and transparency by McArthur River Mines and then Federal Environment Minister, Ian Campbell when he approved MRM's application to expand its mining operations.

"Approval from the NT Government granting MRM authorisation was conducted in secrecy and with a lack of transparency of the administrative process.

"There was no independent environmental assessment of the proposal by then federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell – he relied on the Northern Territory's environmental assessments which were clearly flawed," said Mr Hill.

"Nor did he have all the relevant documents to those environmental assessments when he granted final approvals to MRM's open cut mining activities.

"The NLC and the traditional owners call on the Federal Government to conduct an independent environment assessment, which has never been conducted, to determine the environmental impacts of MRM's operation.

"The NLC and the traditional owners also demand that MRM immediately halt its diversion of the McArthur River and, in accordance with its undertaking to the Federal Court in May 2008, restore the river to its original position and as near as possible to its original condition.

"We also demand that MRM pay just compensation to the traditional owners for the damage caused to date.

"We will seek an urgent meeting the Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, to discuss these issues. We will also consider what our next legal options are, and what further action the traditional owners wish to take."

Ends.

Media Contact: **Ursula Raymond** (08) 8920 5114 or 0438 854 049
Todd Condie (08) 8920 5103 or 0417 803 425