



Northern Land Council

MEDIA STATEMENT

Traditional owners win Federal Court Appeal over McArthur River Mine

17 December 2008

The Northern Land Council (NLC) and the traditional owners for the Borroloola region are very pleased with today's Federal Court decision which upheld the traditional owners appeal against mining company Xstrata's expansion of the McArthur River Mine.

The NLC and the traditional owners now demand that Xstrata immediately halt its diversion of the McArthur River, and to restore it to its original position.

NLC Chief Executive, Kim Hill said today's Federal Court decision endorses the traditional owners' views that there was a lack of due process and transparency by MRM and then Federal Environment Minister, Ian Campbell when he approved MRM's application to expand its mining operations.

"The NLC and traditional owners now call on the Federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett to conduct an independent environmental assessment which should have been conducted in the first instance to determine the environmental impacts MRM's mining operation would have.

"The NLC and the traditional owners also demand that MRM now properly engage with the traditional owners in negotiating a mining agreement that will provide for compensation, jobs and training, boost local businesses – and will detail provisions for environmental protection and its monitoring over the mining activities," said Mr Hill.

"The traditional owners have been asking for this for 15 years, and now is the time for MRM to fix the damage.

"The decision now rests with the Federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, to decide how MRM's mining operations will proceed and ensure that proper environmental processes are followed.

"But, today the traditional owners are relieved and happy that they can continue to protect their cultural lands including hunting, fishing, sacred sites and the ceremonies and songs attached to it."

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