



Northern Land Council

MEDIA ADVISORY

Kava bust points to Customs failure

19 April 2010

Northern Land Council (NLC) Chief Executive Mr Kim Hill today said a major kava bust by NT Police at the weekend shows not enough is being done to keep the drug out of Australia.

Police intercepted 71 kilograms of kava, with a street value of between \$50,000 and \$70,000, when they searched a vehicle travelling on the Stuart Highway at the weekend.

Mr Hill commended Katherine Police for their diligent and proactive work in locating the kava haul, but questioned how it arrived in Australia in the first place.

“While this bust is a feather in the cap for members of the Northern Territory Police Force, it shows that kava continues to slip through the Customs net.”

Mr Hill questioned how someone could get picked up with more than 70 kilograms of kava in the Northern Territory when there is a two kilogram personal import restriction for people arriving in Australia.

“Despite the detection and capture of these kava black marketeers, the Australian Customs Service is continuing to fail badly in the detection of illegal kava imports,” he said.

“Kava is a large and bulky commodity and ought to be recognised at point of entry if Customs staffs were trained and doing their job.”

Mr Hill said despite reassurances from the previous Minister Bob Debus, it appeared little had changed within Customs.

He has written to Home Affairs Minister Brendan O’Connor, calling on Customs to lift its game.