



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

‘45 years of unfinished business’ resolved with handback of land at Kakadu

25 March 2022

Traditional Owners of the land in the Northern Territory’s Kakadu region celebrated the long-overdue return of their ancestral lands to their control following the delivery of the Deeds of Title to large tracts of the Kakadu National Park by the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Honourable Ken Wyatt AM MP.

At a ceremony held at Coinda on Thursday 24 March 2022, Minister Wyatt handed back to Traditional Owners and their families the inalienable freehold title over four land claim areas comprising about 50 per cent of the Park.

Northern Land Council Chairman Samuel Bush-Blanasi congratulated Traditional Owners on the long-awaited return of their country following the settlement of the Kakadu Region Land Claims.

“Today’s land grants to the Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust, to be held on behalf of the Traditional Owners, completes 45 years of unfinished business,” Mr Bush-Blanasi said.

“Back in 1977, the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry recommended the recognition of the land in the Alligator Rivers Region - what we know as stage one, Kakadu National Park - as Aboriginal land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

“For too long there have been two classes of land in Kakadu National Park – Aboriginal land and other land ‘subject to Aboriginal land claim’. Today that has been fixed once and for all time.

“This land that has been returned is the traditional country of the Limilngan/Minitja, Murumburr, Garndidjbal, Yurlkmanj, Wurngomgu, Bolmo, Wurrkbarbar, Matjba, Uwinymil, Bunidj, Djindibi, Mirrar Gundjeihmi and Dadjbaku peoples.”

Mr Bush-Blanasi said the return of land to the Traditional Owners heralds a range of new and exciting opportunities.

“The resolution of the underlying land title will allow for new investment and tourism opportunities. We are already seeing the development of more locally-owned and operated Aboriginal tourism and other business enterprises in Kakadu.

“There are new opportunities for Traditional Owners to be directing, involved in and to benefit from improved and enhanced park operations, fire abatement programs and the new carbon economy. These are just a few examples.

“Traditional Owners can also take better care of their country through improved joint management and cultural site protection and by caring for their country as only they know how to. There will be wonderful opportunities for cultural revitalisation and to celebrate the living cultural traditions of the traditional owners,” said Mr Bush-Blanasi.