



NORTHERN  
LAND COUNCIL

**MEDIA RELEASE**

*Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life*

## **NLC welcomes appointment of Treaty Commissioner**

18 February 2018

**The Northern Land Council welcomes the appointment of Professor Michael Dodson AM to the role of Northern Territory Treaty Commissioner.**

“Professor Dodson is the most qualified person for this position because of his outstanding contribution to the community to date,” said NLC interim acting CEO Dr John Ah Kit.

“He has proved himself to be an outstanding citizen, assisting our country to progress in many ways, particularly in bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together,” said Dr Ah Kit.

“Professor Dodson has strong connections to the Territory. We grew up together in the Territory and he is a Territorian at heart. He also has a long history with the Northern Land Council, working as a senior legal advisor to the NLC.

“He knows the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and knows what Aboriginal people want. We look forward to working alongside him during the next phase of the Treaty process.

“This is an important opportunity to reset the relationship between the Territory’s First Nations and the Government,” said Dr Ah Kit.

The role of the Treaty Commissioner will be to lead the advancement of a treaty, including consulting with Aboriginal people and organisations across the Territory, and developing a framework for Treaty negotiations.

The Territory Labor Government promised soon after the election in 2016 to advance a Treaty. On 8 June 2018, the Northern Territory’s four Land Councils and the Northern Territory Government signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding (the “Barunga Agreement”), paving the way for consultations to begin with Aboriginal people about a Treaty.

Significantly, the MoU was signed on the first day of the Barunga Sport and Cultural Festival – the 30th anniversary of the presentation of the Barunga Statement to Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who went on to promise a Treaty between the Commonwealth and Australia’s Indigenous peoples, but has remained undelivered.

The appointment of an independent Treaty Commissioner formed part of the terms of the MoU.

The MoU prescribes that all Territorians should ultimately benefit from any Treaty, which must provide for substantive outcomes. It’s founded on the agreement that there has been “deep injustice done to Aboriginal people, including violent dispossession, the regression of their languages and cultures and the forcible removal of children from their families, which have left a legacy of trauma and loss that needs to be addressed and healed”.

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