



NORTHERN  
LAND COUNCIL

**MEDIA RELEASE**

*Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life*

## **History made with Aboriginal Sea Company incorporation**

25 February 2022

On Friday 18 February 2022, the Aboriginal Sea Company (ASC) was incorporated, marking a major milestone in the historic Blue Mud Bay settlement.

With over 85 per cent of the Northern Territory coastline already subject to Aboriginal ownership, and another 10 per cent subject to claim, the establishment of the ASC heralds a new era of economic empowerment for Indigenous Territorians.

The Blue Mud Bay High Court judgement in 2008 found that Traditional Owners have the right to control access to waters overlying ‘Aboriginal Land’ including the intertidal zone.

This milestone implements a centrepiece of the Blue Mud Bay Implementation Action Plan. The plan was signed by the Northern Land Council, under the leadership of Chairman Samuel Bush-Blanasi and then CEO Marion Scrymgour, and Northern Territory Government in July 2020. This followed an agreement struck a year earlier with key stakeholders.

“We have been waiting for this moment ever since we signed the Nitmiluk Heads of Agreement in 2019,” Northern Land Council Chairman Samuel Bush-Blanasi said.

“Traditional Owners have been very generous giving permit free access for over a decade since 2008. In 2019 we signed an agreement with the NT Seafood Council, the Amateur Fishermen’s Association of the NT, the NT Guided Fishing Industry Association and the NT Government. Everyone has been waiting for this for a long time, especially Traditional Owners,” Mr Bush-Blanasi said.

The NTG has supported the development of the ASC. The new entity will facilitate the participation of Traditional Owners in commercial fishing, aquaculture and other opportunities associated with fishing activities in the NT.

“This is only the beginning of the story,” Northern Land Council CEO Mr Joe Martin-Jard said.

“We are already working on amendments to overhaul the NT Fisheries Act as part of the Action Plan. Not only will the ASC provide the opportunity for more jobs, but it will enable Aboriginal people to implement profitable and sustainable fishing policies and care for their most precious resource in a way only they know how,” Mr Martin-Jard said.

The ASC will be governed by a board comprising equal representation from the three land councils with traditional ownership of sea country – Northern, Tiwi and Anindilyakwa land councils; as well as independent industry experts agreed upon by the land council representatives.

“Aboriginal people have fought hard for rights to land and sea country and the Northern Land Council has taken up the fight for almost 50 years. We have had many critics of land rights over the years, but the sky hasn’t fallen in. It’s good for the economy and it’s good for Traditional Owners. Everyone benefits,” said Mr Bush-Blanasi.

**ENDS**