



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Nation mourns loss of great leader

3 April 2023

Today we mourn the loss of a great leader, statesman, and father.

On behalf of past and present Members and staff, the Chair of the Northern Land Council, Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi, offered his sincere condolences to Mr Yunupingu's family.

“Mr Yunupingu will always have a special place in the heart of the Northern Land Council. He served as Chair for almost half our existence. This year is our 50th anniversary. We are part of his great legacy,” said Dr Bush-Blanasi.

Mr Yunupingu served eight terms as NLC Chair, spanning 24 years, from 1977 to 1980 and 1983 to 2004.

“He was in the frontline of the fight for land rights. Those days were tough. But he was tougher. Governments and everyone opposed us all the way. He took the fight to the streets, to Canberra and to the High Court many times. Lots of people today don't remember what it was like. But we do and we will never forget,” said Dr Bush-Blanasi.

The Northern Land Council will be closed today, 3 April 2023, out of respect.

CEO of the Northern Land Council, Joe Martin-Jard, called on NLC staff to use this time to pause and reflect on Mr Yunupingu's historic achievements, from the Yirrkala Bark Petitions in 1963 to the Barunga Statement in 1988, to becoming the inspiration for the Land Council's strategic policy called 'activating land and sea rights.'

“The term 'activating land rights' was first used by Mr Yunupingu and we are using this as the basis for our long-term future direction. It is true to say of Mr Yunupingu that if we have seen far, it is because we have stood on the shoulders of this giant leader,” said Mr Martin-Jard.

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