



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Yunupingu honoured as a man of action who spoke truth to power

Thursday 18 May 2023

The Northern Land Council today honoured Yunupingu as a fierce fighter for land and sea rights, the Land Council, and for Aboriginal people across Australia.

Still in his 20's, Yunupingu was first elected Chair of the NLC in 1977 and served eight terms - almost half the time of the council's existence*.

Yunupingu's words from a 1977 National Press Club speech still resonate today and the NLC continues to be guided by his leadership, courage and wisdom.

From Yunupingu's 1977 Press Club speech as NLC Chair:

"These are difficult days for all of us, Aboriginal Australians and European Australians as we learn to live together in a new way, with real equality... We [Aboriginal people] want to share this land with you, and we ask you to share it with us, openly, and without fear or secret dealings."

Quotes attributable to Northern Land Council's current Chair, Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi:

- The Northern Land Council owes Yunupingu a debt that can never be repaid.
- He was our Chair for almost a quarter of a century.
- In 2018 he came to a meeting of the four NT land councils on the 30th anniversary of the Barunga Statement. He signed it in 1988 with the Chairs of the other three land councils.
- His history is our history.
- As Chair of the NLC Yunupingu was a true diplomat, a courageous leader, and a man of great vision.
- He was a fierce fighter for the Northern Land Council and for Aboriginal people across the NLC's region and across Australia.
- We will continue what he started and always honour his memory and his historic achievements.

NLC Chair Mr Samuel Bush-Blanasi was unable to attend the memorial ceremony at Gungahara, NE Arnhem Land. His speech was delivered by CEO Joe Martin-Jard - attribution to Chair Bush-Blanasi.

*The Northern Land Council is celebrating 50 years since the 1973 meeting of Traditional Owners who constituted the NLC's inaugural Full Council.

In June 2023, the four land councils of the Northern Territory will meet in Barunga on the 35th anniversary of the Barunga Statement.