

NLC CHAIR ANNOUNCED NT AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

1 November 2022

The Northern Land Council congratulates Chair, Samuel Bush-Blanasi, for his award as the 2023 Northern Territory Australian of the Year.

Northern Territory Chief Minister, the Hon. Natasha Fyles, made the announcement at the awards ceremony held at the Darwin Convention Centre on Monday, 31 October 2022.

“All Members and staff of the Northern Land Council can be proud of his achievement,” NLC CEO Joe Martin-Jard said following the announcement. “The award recognises a significant contribution to the Australian community and nation, an inspirational role model, someone who has done the hard yards and whose challenges and triumphs are manifested in their life experience and personal journey. The Chair is all of these things and this award is richly deserved.”

In accepting the award Samuel spoke about the importance of Learning on Country, NLC’s flagship program connecting school students to work on country with NLC Ranger groups, increasing secondary school participation and retention rates and benefiting families and communities across the NLC region.

Samuel also spoke with pride about the High Court’s Blue Mud Bay decision and the personal significance of Blue Mud Bay in Arnhem Land as his mother’s country. As a result of this decision, Traditional Owners now have ownership of more than eighty percent of the NT coastline. Earlier this year the Aboriginal Sea Company was established to help deliver jobs and opportunities for Aboriginal people across the Top End.

When asked about Constitutional recognition and the referendum, Samuel said, “It means a lot to us Indigenous people in Australia because we need to be included in the Constitution. The referendum is about including us into the Constitution so we can have a greater say and share the country we call Australia.”

“We will get there in the end if we all work together.”

The Chairman also acknowledged the NLC Executive Council and members of the NLC Full Council for their hard work and commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people across the NLC’s seven regions.

The Chair thanked his family and dedicated the award to NLC staff and to his severely disabled granddaughter, who provides him inspiration and strength.

The winner of the national Australian of Year award for 2023 will be announced in Canberra on 25 January 2023, drawn from the finalists across all states and territories.

We wish Samuel all the best!