



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

New arrangements for recreational fishing from 1 January 2023

8 December 2022

Earlier today the Full Council of the Northern Land Council agreed to updated access arrangements for recreational fishers wanting to access waters overlying Aboriginal land from 1 January 2023.

The current arrangements cease on 31 December 2022 and will be replaced by a permit system.

The permit system will be based on location, date and time and will initially be free of charge. It will be available on the NLC website, which will be updated to reflect these arrangements before the end of the year.

The Chairman of the Northern Land Council, Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi, said the updated arrangements will balance the rights of Traditional Owners and the interests of recreational fishers.

“For the last two years the NLC has provided recreational fishers with a simple registration system giving recreational fishing access free of charge to the majority of Aboriginal sea country. There have been thousands of registrations during that time,” Dr Bush-Blanasi said.

Importantly, permit free fishing will continue for popular fishing areas around Darwin and Bynoe Harbours. Long-term permit-free access arrangements will continue to apply in the Daly River, Nhulunbuy, Port Keats and McArthur River regions, based on existing agreements between the NT government, the NLC and Traditional Owners.

Parts of the Finnis River and Mini Mini areas will remain closed to recreational fishers. The NLC is working with the NT government to progress negotiations with Traditional Owners for long term agreements for recreational fishing in these areas.

With regard to the impact on business, NLC CEO Mr Joe Martin-Jard noted the positive working relationship with both the commercial and fishing tourism sectors. “Commercial operators have been advised that Section 19 agreements under the Land Rights Act will be required to operate on waters overlying Aboriginal land from 1 January 2023. The NLC will continue to work in good faith with Traditional Owners and all other stakeholders,” said Mr Martin-Jard.

Dr Samuel Bush-Blanasi said the updated arrangements represent the start of a new era. “Fourteen years after the High Court’s Blue Mud Bay decision we are finally seeing the rights of Traditional Owners being respected. We will keep looking at the arrangements to make sure they reflect the legal rights and interests of the Traditional Owners of that country.”

The permit system will be accessible on the NLC website before the end of the year. The NLC website will be updated to reflect these arrangements.