



North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance

Chief Executive Officer: Joe Morrison
Purple 12.3.27, NAILSMA, Charles Darwin University NT 0909
Ph. 08 8946 7691
Overseas +61 8 8946 7691
Fax. 08 8946 6388
Overseas +61 8 8946 6388
Email: Jessica.LewFatt@cdu.edu.au
www.nailsma.org.au

Looking after our Country...our way...

For immediate release

A new approach to northern Indigenous development

23 June 2009

DARWIN - The North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) believes current approaches used to engage with Indigenous people over matters such as the management of water resources, natural resources, world heritage listing, research, innovation, and development in general must urgently change if they are not to profoundly set-back the advancement of Indigenous people.

"Despite the Australian Government's recent apology and support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, there are widening gaps that are stopping Indigenous Australians from being part of building, managing and protecting the north for all Australians," said Chair of the Alliance Mr Richie Ah Mat.

"Initiatives pertaining to the management, use and development of the Indigenous estate across the north must have free, prior and informed consent as their basis if they are to be successfully adopted by communities.

"Failure to take such a respectful approach will rob Indigenous people of their place and their contribution to nation building," he said.

Mr Ah Mat believes there has been a lack of engagement with Indigenous people on many important issues in the north that must be addressed urgently.

"We hear constantly about the failed state of remote Indigenous communities. NAILSMA wants to contribute positively to development in the north with all stakeholders.

"We simply do not want a situation in the north, where the aspirations and rights of Indigenous people to develop and manage their lands continue to be ignored.

"We must come together and plan strategically, but we must empower our communities first and foremost," he said.

CEO of the Alliance, Mr Joe Morrison believes the relationship between Indigenous communities and other stakeholders must be reset as a priority.

"It's simply unacceptable that in 2009, Indigenous people remain responsive to an insurmountable number of policy failures that do not recognise and respect the rights of Indigenous people in the development of north Australia."

NAILSMA is calling on the Australian Government to support peak Indigenous organisations across northern Australia, so they can be properly engaged in decisions about what happens on their country.

"The Australian Government must support strategic engagement of Indigenous people and other stakeholders across north Australia," said Mr Morrison.

"It is critical that a strategic partnership be formed with the Australian Government, State Governments, business community, conservation groups and other sectors to ensure that the north's future is built respectfully from a vibrant, well informed and resourced Indigenous community.

Balkanu



Kimmerley Land Council



Northern Land Council



“We need to move away from disconnected, adhoc and short-term approaches that are removed from the everyday aspects of Indigenous people’s lives. And most importantly, we must move away from being the last to be considered in important development matters to being the first” he said.

“NAILSMA understands the challenges Indigenous people face with respect to these matters,” said Mr Morrison. “The alliance is firmly placing itself in a situation to deliver on reshaping the north under the guidance of Australia’s first peoples.

“We are calling on relevant governments, NGO’s and the Business community to work with us to ensure that our children’s place in nation building is equal to all others in northern Australia,” said Mr Morrison.

###

Media Contacts:

To arrange an interview with Mr. Richie Ah Mat or Mr. Joe Morrison, please contact Jessica LewFatt.

Tel: 08 8946 7691

Fax: 08 8946 6388

Mob: 0405 349 496

Email: Jessica.LewFatt@cdu.edu.au

NAILSMA Alliance:

Kimberley Land Council

Northern Land Council

Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation
