



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

Daly consultations welcome, but more time needed

21 November 2003

Traditional owners in the Douglas/Daly Region have welcomed Chief Minister Clare Martin's intervention in the debate over plans to develop the region, but remain concerned over the short timeframe allotted for the development of a draft Integrated Regional Land Use Plan.

NLC Deputy Chairman John Daly, who is also a traditional owner in the southern Daly River region, said traditional owners were pleased the Chief Minister had made a commitment not to dam the Daly River and to impose a moratorium on new land clearing approvals in the region until the draft Land Use Plan was completed.

"The appointment of Rick Farley to head the new Daly Region Community Reference Group (CRG) is also an inspired choice, given his breadth of experience in land management issues," Mr Daly said.

"However, we remain concerned that the CRG will not have enough time to properly consider all the issues involved in the development of the draft Land Use Plan. According to the CRG's Terms of Reference – which I received only on Wednesday this week – the first draft Land Use Plan is meant to be delivered to the Chief Minister in June next year."

"Take away Christmas and that leaves CRG members just six months to do their work, with just nine months allotted for the completion of the final draft Land Use Plan, including all community consultations."

Mr Daly said it was also important that the Expert Reference Group, which will provide high-level advice to the CRG, be at arm's length from government.

"While we have no concerns with the three scientific experts appointed to the Reference Group, their presence appears to be overshadowed by the four senior government officials sitting on the same panel," he said.

Mr Daly said that while much weight had been given to the impacts of development on the region's environmental, social and economic values, Aboriginal people were just as concerned about disruptions to their cultural and heritage values.

"There are dreaming trails all along the Daly River and into the hinterland, and many sacred sites that are vitally important to local belief systems. Any future development plan must build in protection for these areas."