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PEOPLE IN NEW SOUTH WALES THROUGH
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Northern Region Aboriginal communities sign historic agreement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 23, 2010

Fourteen Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCS) from the Northern Region of NSW will today take part in the historic signing of a Heads of Agreement with the state and federal governments.

The document is a precursor to the signing of a Regional Partnership Agreement later in the year, which will govern how the federal and state governments engage with Aboriginal people in Northern NSW in crucial areas such as housing, culture and heritage, and economic development.

The 14 LALCs engaged in the process are Amaroo, Anaiwan, Armidale, Ashford, Coonabarabran, Dorrigo Plateau, Glen Innes, Guyra, Moombahlene, Nungaroo, Red Chief, Tamworth, Walhallow, Wanaruah.

Councillor for the Northern Region and Deputy Chair of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Tom Briggs, said he was heartened at the level of support across the region – and in Sydney and Canberra – for Aboriginal people taking better control of their lives.

“The Heads of Agreement signed today will inform the process for signing a Regional Partnership Agreement between the 14 LALCs, and the state and federal governments,” Councillor Briggs said.

“Ultimately, this process today is about Aboriginal people in Northern NSW forging a better partnership with governments at all levels, and working together to deliver outcomes.

“This process has been a long time in the making. We have been working toward this for almost two decades. We are now one step closer, an agreement to have an agreement. But now we have the space to formalise our relationship and work together to better the lives of Aboriginal people.”

Last year, the 14 LALCs signed an historic Friendship Treaty, which committed them to work together to improve outcomes across all social indicators – in particular economic development - for Aboriginal people in Northern NSW.

“The Friendship Treaty has been the platform on which we’ve started to build things like the Regional Partnership Agreement,” Cr Briggs said.

“And through this agreement, we hope to better inform governments at all levels on what Aboriginal people in this region need to gain a better quality of life, and economic independence.

“I thank NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Paul Lynch; federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin; and federal Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development, Mark Arbib, for their invaluable support for this process.

“I wish to particularly highlight the role played by the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor, who has been a strong supporter of Aboriginal people in this region for many years. Mr

Windsor played a crucial role in bringing the state and federal governments together with our people on the Regional Partnership Agreement. This sort of advocacy – and capacity – is indicative of the work he does for the people of New England.

“Most of all, I thank the Aboriginal people of this region for their patience, their determination and their foresight.

“We’ve shown the rest of the state, and the rest of the country, that productive partnerships can be forged when Aboriginal people work together with state and federal politicians towards a common goal.

“This agreement represents a line in the sand - a statement that we all recognise the need to work together. Of course, we should be fully aware that the eyes of Aboriginal people will now be focussed on achieving outcomes.

“Outcomes will be how we are measured by our mob.

“The hard work will now commence. We must focus on putting in place structures and programs which put our people at the centre of our work.

“In doing so, we look forward to a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship, where we come to the table as equal partners.”

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NOTE TO MEDIA: Images of today’s event are available on request.