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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

# media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

## From Murrin Bridge to New York

11 May 2009

**Craig Cromelin, the elected Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region on the NSW Aboriginal Land Council will this week travel to New York to attend the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues.**

And according to the former cotton picker, carpenter and welder, the trip is an example of what can come of making the most of your opportunities – especially when working in Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

“Who would have thought that a descendant of the Ngiyampaa people of south-west New South Wales, would be addressing the United Nations on issues that affect hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal people around the world?”

Cr Cromelin said that he was both honoured and thrilled to have been selected to represent his people at the global forum but added that no matter where he travels - the Wiradjuri region is always on his mind.

“I do not and will not forget where I come from and how I got here,” the Murrin Bridge resident said.

“I’ve been fortunate to have grown up in an era when the old people were still practicing our culture.”

“Like most young kids, I was more interested in sport than politics and community affairs. That was until I stood for a position on the board of the local housing organisation – Coonchie,” he said.

“It was the only organisation we had before the Land Council was formed and every young kid in our community grew up dreaming of working for Coonchie.”

“The lack of opportunity is one of the things I most remember as a kid.”

“However, by being involved with Local Land Councils over the last two decades in a various capacities I have been provided with so many opportunities and experiences that I would have otherwise only dreamt about.”

Cr Cromelin highlighted that one such occasion was speaking in the NSW Parliament in June 2008 at a special ceremony as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

“I hope that other people of this generation and future generations get involved with their Local Aboriginal Land Council which can assist them to achieve great things for themselves and also their people,” he said.

Councillor Cromelin said he intends to tell delegates at the UN that the land rights network throughout NSW stands on its own two feet.

“I will be taking full advantage of this opportunity by ensuring I get my point of view across.”

The theme for this year’s UN Forum is ‘Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods – the stewardship role of Indigenous peoples and new challenges.

Councillor Cromelin said the main focus areas for the 2009 forum were:

- Social and Economic Development
- Indigenous women
- United National Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples; and
- Emerging issues from different member States.

Cr Cromelin highlighted that NSWALC had held special consultative status within the UN’s Economic and Social Council for more than a decade.

“Opportunities are now starting to emerge that will foster and enhance the real potential for our people.”

“We can and do work with government to develop community base Aboriginal employment strategies as well as identifying suitable and viable commercial enterprise opportunities for our people.”

“NSWALC wants to pursue partnerships with key industry groups to build commercial and economic sustainability for Aboriginal people across NSW.”