

## **Indigenous Water Futures Forum hailed a huge success.**

12<sup>th</sup> August 2009

The north Australian Indigenous Experts Water Futures Forum that was held 5-6<sup>th</sup> August at Mary River in the Northern Territory was hailed a huge success.

Around 80 key Indigenous experts strategically involved in water convened to discuss their interests and views on future water development in northern Australia.

The Northern Land and Water Taskforce commissioned the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance to instigate dialogue on Indigenous interests and views for development in the north. Institutional and governance arrangements needed to ensure sustainability of Indigenous rights in water were also discussed.

Joe Morrison, CEO of NAILSMA, hailed the forum as a huge success and reaffirms Indigenous people's as the inherent decision makers on these matters in northern Australia.

"I believe the forum was extremely successful as a starting point to commence strategic discussions around water and broadly, Indigenous development in the north", he says

"The level of engagement from participants confirms Indigenous people's ongoing responsibilities and obligations and connections to water through their management of inherent land and sea estates", he says.

As well as providing a clear set of recommendations to the Taskforce, the Forum was integral for the development of the Mary River Statement.

The Mary River Statement was written to stress the fundamental Indigenous principles of water and reinforces Indigenous people as being intrinsically entwined with land and water.

"The Statement offers testament to the seriousness of Indigenous peoples contribution and participation in policy decision making. It also sends a message that Indigenous people cannot be on the margins of discussions about development in the north, but drivers of such", says Mr Morrison.

The Mary River Statement can be downloaded from the NAILSMA web site.

###

NAILSMA is an alliance of the Kimberley Land Council, Northern Land Council, Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Cooperation and Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation.

Media Contacts:

To arrange an interview with Joe Morrison, please contact Jessica Lew-Fatt.

Tel: 08 8946 7691

Fax: 08 8946 6388

Email: [Jessica.LewFatt@cdu.edu.au](mailto:Jessica.LewFatt@cdu.edu.au)

For more information about the Water Futures Forum, visit the NAILSMA Forum web site [www.nailsma.org.au](http://www.nailsma.org.au).

NAILSMA Alliance  
Kimberley Land Council  
Northern Land Council  
Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation  
Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation