Indigenous communities free to build a better future

18 September 2015

Indigenous communities in Darwin will be empowered to take control of their own futures thanks to a landmark agreement with the Northern Territory Government.

A Memorandum of Understanding will enable the Gwalwa Daraniki Association (GDA) to unlock the economic potential of the land it administers, which includes the communities of Kulaluk and Minmarama.

Chief Minister Adam Giles said the Territory Government would work with the GDA to develop an economic master plan for 3sq km of Crown land between Ludmilla Creek and Nightcliff.

Parcels within the lease which can be developed for commercial purposes and support local job creation will then converted to freehold and held by the GDA for the benefit of its members.

“For too long governments have been reluctant to hand Indigenous people full control of their own lands,” Mr Giles said.

“But I believe in giving communities the chance to build a better and brighter future for themselves.

“This breakthrough agreement for the Territory will deliver more income and more jobs for a community that is determined to break the cycle of welfare dependency.”

Most of the Kulaluk lease will remain as conservation land, but plans have already been approved to develop a retail precinct and medical centre on land between Dick Ward Drive and Bagot Road.

Future land uses could include commercial and residential developments, including the building of a new aged care home.

The Gwalwa Daraniki Association was granted a Crown lease in perpetuity in 1975 and today 140 people live at of Kulaluk and Minmarama.

Lands and Planning Minister David Tollner said he hoped other communities would follow the lead set by the GDA.
“It’s time we allowed Territorians to take responsibility for their own futures,” Mr Tollner said.

“I’m sure the Gwalwa Daraniki Association will succeed and inspire other communities to seize the opportunities offered by the Territory Government.”

Helen Secretary, chairwoman of the GDA, said the agreement opened up a brighter future for her community.

“This is about creating jobs and opportunities for our kids. Now the community will say what happens on our land,” Ms Secretary said.

Media contacts: Scott Whitby 0438 531583 (Chief Minister), Stuart Sherwin 0438 103005 (Minister Tollner)