A significant agreement has been reached between an exploration company and traditional land owners, with the signing of the Northern Territory’s first Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) for a petroleum exploration company.

Mines and Energy Minister, Kon Vatskalis, today congratulated Merlin Energy and the Central Land Council (CLC) on the important action.

“This exploration company has broken new ground in signing this agreement with the Central Land Council on behalf of Traditional Owners in the area,” he said.

“This is a clear indication that the company recognises its responsibilities in the preservation and enrichment of the cultural heritage and social welfare of traditional owners.”

Mr Vatskalis said the ILUA will allow Merlin Energy to explore for petroleum in the Pedirka Basin, near the Northern Territory and South Australian borders.

While the permit will be the sixth current petroleum exploration permit in the Northern Territory, it will be the first petroleum exploration permit issued in the Territory involving the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) provisions of the Native Title Act (Commonwealth).

The permit area covers vacant Crown land, Aboriginal Land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, freehold land and pastoral land near the SA border.

The Central Land Council was involved in negotiating the ILUA under the Native Title Act and an exploration agreement under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act.

Neither the Northern Territory nor the Commonwealth Governments are party to the ILUA.

The portion of the permit area that is Aboriginal Land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act is subject to a separate exploration agreement. The Commonwealth Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs must consent to this agreement.

**Media Note:** Minister Vatskalis is in Alice Springs today and tomorrow for [Community Cabinet](#).