

Gumatj sign forestry deal with Forestry Tasmania

A partnership between Gumatj traditional owners from north east Arnhem land and Forestry Tasmania will help build a timber industry in East Arnhem Land.

Gumatj Corporation's Chairman, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, said the collaboration with Forestry Tasmania would provide jobs, training, business opportunities and cheaper building materials for both the Gumatj clan and other local businesses.

"The forestry project is a win-win-win outcome," Mr Yunupingu said. "It will create a future for Gumatj men and women on their own land, using their own materials and building their own houses."

"Forestry Tasmania staff and Gumatj people will learn from each other to manage the land while creating a sustainable timber industry," he said.

Indigenous forestry workers will selectively harvest hardwood from 850 hectares of land on the Rio Tinto Alcan bauxite mining lease, near Nhulunbuy, and use the timber to build houses on Gumatj homelands, supported by the Jack Thompson Foundation.

Apart from timber milling, Mr Yunupingu said business

opportunities include the collection and sale of seeds, sales of sawn timber, processing of timber products for high value uses such as furniture, wood veneer products, the use of waste wood instead of bunker fuel to generate power, carbon credits and fire management.

Forestry Tasmania and the Gumatj Corporation will also investigate tourism opportunities based on ecotourism and cultural activities.

The Gumatj clan are Yolngu people and traditional owners of land on and around the Gove Peninsula in North East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, including the Rio Tinto Alcan bauxite mine near Nhulunbuy.

Under the terms of the agreement, Forestry Tasmania will work with the Gumatj Corporation to develop a sustainable timber industry, based on selective harvesting and management of hardwood on the Gumatj clan estate and use of the timber for a range of associated industries.



**Above: A Gumatj mobile saw mill
Right left: Gumatj Corporation's Chairman, Galarrwuy Yunupingu with Forestry Tasmania representative**



School attendance measure begins in NT

From January this year, parents in Hermannsburg, Katherine, Katherine town camps, Wallace Rockhole, Wadeye and Tiwi Islands who are receiving income support will be required to tell Centrelink where their children are enrolled and to take reasonable measures to ensure their children attend school regularly.

Parents who fail to enrol their children or take reasonable measures to get their children to go to school, may have their income support payments suspended until their children are enrolled or attend school.

The Government says a decision to temporarily withhold a parent's income support will be a last resort.

The school attendance measure will only be used after a series of steps have been taken to increase parental responsibility including developing an attendance plan with the parent, clearly setting out

actions parents should take to improve school attendance.

Where it can be shown the parent has failed, despite help from the child's school and Centrelink, to exercise parental responsibility to ensure the child is enrolled and attending school, payments may be suspended.

Full back pay will be provided when parents exercise parental responsibility within a 13 week period.

Centrelink is currently visiting all trial communities to inform parents of the school attendance measure.

High Court Intervention loss for Traditional Owners

Traditional Owners of Maningrida have lost a High Court case challenging the Federal Intervention, but have won the right to pursue compensation for the compulsory acquisition of Aboriginal land.

The case was launched by Reggie Wurridjal, a Traditional Owner of Maningrida, who challenged the validity and constitutionality of leases over Maningrida land in western Arnhem Land.

In the High Court ruling, the majority of judges found that an amendment to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act allowing the Commonwealth to take five-year leases over land, communities and town camps was valid.

The court said the acquisition was on 'just terms' because the

laws underpinning the intervention provided for proper compensation for Aboriginal organisations and people.

They found, however, that there were grounds for land councils to ask for 'just terms' compensation.

Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin said as soon as the Northern Territory valuer-general had determined the valuation of the level of compensation to be paid to the 73 prescribed communities, payments would begin.