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MEDIA RELEASE

LAND COUNCILS AND NORTHERN TERRITORY AGREE ON AN MOU FOR TREATY

A historic meeting between the Northern Territory Government and the Territory's four land councils has agreed to establish a working group to develop a Memorandum of Understanding about how a treaty between the government and the NT's Aboriginal people should progress.

The MoU will cover the principles, consultation process and roadmap leading to a treaty. It will be developed in time for signing at the Barunga Festival on Friday June 8th.

Representatives of the land councils met in Alice Springs with Chief Minister Michael Gunner and Aboriginal MLAs Selena Uiibo and Chansey Paech. It was the first ever meeting between a Territory government and all four land councils to begin a treaty process.

Mr Gunner thanked the land councils for their "constructive engagement and advice" and for having taken the lead in proposing the working group. The land councils want traditional owners and communities to be front and centre during the treaty negotiations. Other Aboriginal organisations will be engaged once the MoU has been drafted.

Mr Gunner made a commitment following the NT election in August 2016 to open discussions about a treaty. He then established an Aboriginal Affairs sub-committee of Cabinet, whose priorities included advancing a treaty.

Mr Gunner told the meeting with land councils that he favoured the appointment of an independent commissioner to lead the advancement of a treaty, following the examples of Victoria and South Australia.

This year's Barunga festival will mark the 30th anniversary of the presentation of the Barunga Statement to Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who promised a treaty with Aboriginal people. The Barunga Statement is now on display in Parliament House, Canberra.

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