



**Mark Speakman**

Attorney General

**Ben Franklin**

Minister for Tourism, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
Minister for the Arts, Minister for Regional Youth

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday 19 December 2022

### **HISTORIC NATIVE TITLE AGREEMENT FOR NORTHERN RIVERS**

The NSW Government today settled the Widjabul Wia-bal native title claim over public land and waters in the Northern Rivers area around Lismore with an historic Federal Court sitting.

As part of the settlement, the Federal Court of Australia today recognised that the Widjabul Wia-bal hold native title over approximately 11,700 hectares around the Lismore area.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said the Federal Court consent determination marked an important moment for the Widjabul Wia-bal of the Bundjalung Nation, who have cared for the land and waters for thousands of years.

Mr Speakman appeared in court in his capacity as NSW's first law officer, with counsel, to provide oral submissions on behalf of the State.

"Today we recognise what the Widjabul Wia-bal have always known - this is Widjabul Wia-bal land," Mr Speakman said.

"The Widjabul Wia-bal and the NSW Government have worked together to deliver the Widjabul Wia-bal's vision for greater land management opportunities, economic prosperity and employment opportunities, and a framework for strong, collaborative relationships into the future."

As part of the settlement of the native title claim, the NSW Government has also provided capacity building support to the Widjabul Wia-bal and has entered into an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) with the Widjabul Wia-bal.

The settlement also includes an agreement to disregard historical extinguishment of native title in national parks within the claim area, paving the way for the future recognition of native title over an additional 2,600 hectares of national parks.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ben Franklin said that the agreement is another example of the NSW Government finding innovative approaches to settle claims, which is critical to the government meeting its commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

"The NSW Government is committed to processing native title claims efficiently in the best interests of Aboriginal groups and the wider community," Mr Franklin said.

"Of the 18 determinations recognising native title in NSW in three decades since the *Native Title Act 1993* commenced, 10 have been in the last six years.

“A key component of this is the NSW Government’s commitment to engaging in a collaborative approach to native title through the use of Indigenous Land Use Agreements.”

The Widjabul Wia-bal sought a determination of their native title rights and interests over 1,559 km<sup>2</sup> of lands and waters around Lismore.

The native title determination area is bounded by Bagotville, Tuckean Nature Reserve and Tucki Tucki to the south; Bungabee State Forest and Cawongla to the west; Nightcap National Park in the north and Wollongbar and Alstonville in the east.

It is anticipated that the Widjabul Wia-bal ILUA will be registered by the National Native Title Tribunal in 2023. When the ILUA is registered, it will be the 18<sup>th</sup> ILUA registered in NSW in the last six years, with more than 60% of all ILUAs in NSW having been registered over this period.

**MEDIA: Sue Finn | Attorney General | 0476 871 252**  
**Ben Ingram | Minister Franklin | 0499 565 629**