

Wednesday 3 June 2015

## **Community unites to celebrate Mabo Day - *It's time to change it up*"**

A major milestone in the history of Torres Strait Islander people in Australia was marked today, as staff from local community organisation Life Without Barriers coordinated a community event celebrating Mabo Day.

The event falls during National Reconciliation Week when, as a nation, it's a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements and to explore how each of us can join the national Reconciliation effort.

To be held in the Serbian Centre in the heart of Cairns, the Mabo Day event recognises and celebrates the historic work of Eddie Mabo\* in fighting for Land Rights on behalf of the Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Life Without Barriers Area Operations Manager Amy Williamson said LWB has made a conscious effort to change its focus this year in line with the National Reconciliation Week theme, and had formed a Torres Strait Islander reference group to ensure events like this could occur.

"LWB has a strong representation of Torres Strait Islander people on our staff in the region and this year their focus has been on providing education and information to the community," she said.

"Eddie Mabo was a pioneer in fighting for the rights of Torres Strait Islander peoples, and we want to bring the community together to remember him and celebrate his success in fighting to change the law in relation to land inheritance."

To involve and engage the entire community on Mabo Day, the Cairns event will showcase a range of interactive hands-on educational activities hosted by LWB's Torres Strait Islander staff including:

- Cooking demonstrations and lessons
- Scone and damper making lessons
- Basket weaving classes
- Dance workshops and demonstrations
- Art displays
- Story telling and yarns with the elders.

The celebration will also be supported by James Cook University who have been responsible for much of the work acknowledging Eddie Mabo over the years as well as hosting the Land Rights conference which launched his campaign. They will host a stall providing historical information about the man and his family, and the scope of the impact of his work.

Ms Williamson said some of the people LWB supports including people with disabilities, older people and children will have the opportunity to attend and experience a major community event in Cairns during National Reconciliation Week, which they can feel proud to participate in.

# WE LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS VE

Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the original owners of the land across all states and territories of Australia. LWB pays respect to Elders both past and present and thanks all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for sharing with us what is the oldest living culture in the world. We are also grateful to the Traditional Owners and Custodians and Elders who have assisted us to inform practice, provide cultural awareness training, and contribute to program design and individual client plans.

**Ends –**

## **EDITORS NOTES**

*National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is celebrated across Australia each year between **27 May and 3 June**. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the Reconciliation journey – the anniversaries of the successful 1967 Referendum and the High Court Mabo decision.*

**3 June, 1992 - The High Court of Australia delivered its landmark Mabo decision** which legally recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a special relationship to the land—that existed prior to colonisation and still exists today. This recognition paved the way for land rights called Native Title.

*\***Eddie Koiki Mabo** (c. 29 June 1936 – 23 January 1992<sup>[1]</sup>) was an [Australian](#) man from the [Torres Strait Islands](#) known for his role in campaigning for [Indigenous land rights](#) and for his role in a landmark decision of the [High Court of Australia](#) which overturned the [legal doctrine](#) of [terra nullius](#) ("land belonging to nobody") which characterised Australian law with regard to land and title.*

**Ref:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eddie\\_Mabo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eddie_Mabo)

---

## **Media Contact:**

**For further information or to arrange interview and photo opportunities, please contact Maree Brindley, External Relations, Media & Events Coordinator, LWB  
Maree.Brindley@lwb.org.au . 0417 210 690.**

## **About Life Without Barriers**

Now in our 20th year, Life Without Barriers has supported thousands of people to live the best life possible and we are proud to champion opportunity for all. We are a not-for-profit organisation working in more than 250 communities to support more than 11,000 people to live their best life possible. Today, we are one of the largest providers of social services in Australia.

We work with individuals, their carers and others in the community to ensure the best care and support is developed for each individual's needs. This includes working in partnership with the community, elders, government and private sector to improve the lives of the people we support. We believe in the rights of people and the importance of relationships. These foundations shape our unique approach to care and underpin the values of Life Without Barriers.