

## Media Release **No.512**

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### **SEA CLAIM WIN A CAUSE FOR TRADITIONAL OWNER CELEBRATION**

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Acting Chairman, Mr Aven Noah, believes the High Court sea claim determination will protect the native title rights of Torres Strait Islanders for generations to come.

Mr Noah welcomed the decision handed down after ten years of legal proceedings as a significant victory for the original claimants, the people of the Torres Strait and the future application of native title Australia wide.

The original claimants included Mr Leo Akiba from Saibai, the late Mr George Mye, from Erub, the late Mr Tabitai Joseph and the late Mr Nepolean Warriia, who lodged the claim on behalf of the Torres Strait people.

Mr Noah said, as the first claim of its type in Australian waters, the decision meant the people of the Torres Strait had now secured the right to control and use their own land and sea resources.

“This provides long term security and with proper management means the Torres Strait will be able to enjoy long term community and economic benefits.

“The decision means that legislation by the Commonwealth and State governments does not extinguish our native title right to marine resources in the Torres Strait.

"Even though Torres Strait Islanders will have to comply with fisheries legislation like other people, we will still be exercising a native title right when we fish commercially."

“It also means native title rights to marine resources will be protected if governments at some stage in the future try to change the rules and apply restrictions or limit our native title rights.”

Mr Noah said the right to use marine resources for commercial purposes provided an important foundation for the future economic security of the Torres Strait community.



Caption: TSRA Acting Chairman, Mr Aven Noah

**ENDS**

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