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MABO DAY CELEBRATIONS CALL FOR NATIONAL DAY OF RECOGNITION

The Chairman of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has called for a national day of recognition and public holiday to acknowledge the landmark Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia.

Joseph Elu said 3 June is an important day for all Australians, not just the people of Mer and the Torres Strait, as it signifies the true spirit of reconciliation.

“Twenty two years ago today a great global myth was shattered when the High Court handed down the historic decision recognising that Australia was not an empty land when it was colonised,” Mr Elu said.

“Mabo Day serves as a reminder of why and how the first people of Australia have had to struggle to gain recognition of their rights in their own country, and has been an inspiration for Indigenous peoples worldwide.

“I am writing to the Prime Minister to express our call for the national day and I would like to encourage other leaders in the community to join with me in lobbying for it as well.”

The TSRA is holding its 90th board meeting on Mer to help celebrate Mabo Day, the first meeting to be held on an outer island community.

Gail Mabo, daughter of the late Eddie Koiko Mabo, who attended the celebrations said acknowledging her father for starting the fight to help the Meriam people of Mer gain recognition of prior ownership of their land was of historical significance.

“Connection to land without boundaries is what makes Indigenous Australians who we are – white law only looks at the physical sense of boundaries,” Ms Mabo says.

“However my father’s fight was not only for the Meriam people, but for all Australians, and the outcome has changed the way all Australian’s view land ownership.

“He started the fight by himself and for many years did it alone – he tried, he got angry and he got sick, but he was eventually joined and helped by others and in the end he triumphed and his name, his love, and most importantly his legacy has lived on.

“The most important thing is to remember he did it for everyone, and the outcomes of the High Court decision should be recognised as part of our history.”

ENDS

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