

Media statement

4 February 2021

NATIONAL NATIVE TITLE COUNCIL THANKS FORMER CHAIR, WELCOMES NEW BOARD LEADERS

The National Native Title Council (NNTC) has this week welcomed Mr Kado Muir as the new Chair of its board and Ms Francine McCarthy as Deputy Chairperson, while thanking Mr Kevin Smith for his leadership as former Chairperson.

Mr Smith, who holds traditional connections to Ugar (Stephen Island) and Erub (Darnley Island) in the Torres Strait is the Chief Executive Officer of Queensland South Native Title Services (QSNTS) and had been Chair of the NNTC board since 2019 until his term expired earlier this week.

NNTC CEO Mr Jamie Lowe remarked on Mr Smith's leadership and his ability to provide shrewd and strategic direction during times of organisational challenges, such as COVID-19 and the Juukan Gorge catastrophe.

"Kevin steered our board through the challenges of 2020 and beyond, where our face-to-face work was disrupted by the pandemic, requiring us to be agile and responsive to a completely new context. He provided invaluable mentorship and guidance for our staff during this time, which also coincided with enormous upheaval in the Indigenous cultural heritage space following the tragic destruction of Juukan Gorge. As a leader, Kevin has sound judgment and a wealth of knowledge, and our staff appreciated his ability to motivate our team and recognise and call out their achievements. We want to extend our thanks to Kevin for his time as our Chair, and we look forward to continuing to work with him well into the future."

New NNTC Chairperson, Mr Muir is the NNTC's former Deputy Chair. He is a Ngalia Traditional Owner from the Goldfield region in WA, and an anthropologist/archaeologist with many years of experience working in cultural heritage, language preservation and traditional ecological education.

"I wish to acknowledge the work of my colleague, Kevin Smith, past chair for his leadership and guidance, and I welcome his continued contribution as a board member. I look forward to building on Kevin's work in 2021 with my board, our Deputy Chair, Francine McCarthy and CEO Jamie Lowe," said Mr Muir.

Mr Muir has provided the NNTC with extensive leadership and direction on cultural heritage matters, and appeared before the Senate last year alongside Mr Lowe during the parliamentary inquiry into the destruction of Juukan Gorge.

“I welcome the amendments to the Native Title Act passed this week and look forward to building on the current momentum for reform in the native title and Aboriginal heritage sector. The two key priority areas for me are to bring a national focus on Aboriginal cultural heritage reform including legislative reform and a pressing priority is to ensure registered native title bodies corporate are funded and resourced adequately for effective discharge of their functions.”

Mr Muir is joined by new Deputy Chairperson, Ms Francine McCarthy, a Warumungu woman with extensive native title experience working at the Central Land Council, who has also held previous board positions at the NNTC.

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