

# YOLNGU NATIONS LETTERSTICK

A letterstick is used traditionally to deliver a message, via intermediaries, across long distances. It uses symbolic references to carry the intent of the sender's communication. Lettersticks were often of hand size and made of wood with incisions or burnt markings. This letterstick is earth pigments on incised wood.

This letterstick is one of four. It is a message to the Northern Territory parliament from the Yolngu nations and more broadly the peoples of Northern Arnhem Land.

On the right hand side of the letterstick the symbols for ṇärra'-parliament and the two Yolngu pillars of

society, Dhuwa and Yirritja, combine to speak of the Yolngu parliaments. This is then juxtaposed with another symbol of ṇärra'-parliament and etchings of six states and two territories of the Australian nation. These symbols combine to speak of the parliaments of Australian jurisdiction.

The subsequent message is one of the Yolngu nations outlining the equal standing of their ṇärra' institution compared to Australian parliaments. It is therefore together a declaration of ongoing Yolngu sovereignty while also being a diplomatic gesture of intent, and also invitation, to work toward a place of mutual acceptance between Yolngu and Australian jurisdictions.

GUYULA

PAPER TABLED

....15./...10....16....

CLERK

AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

YIRRITJA SYMBOL

DHUWA SYMBOL

YOLŇU ṆÄRRA'-PARLIAMENT



6 STATES AND 2 TERRITORIES  
OF AUSTRALIA

ORIGINAL PAPER

No. 30  
Laid on the Table  
15./10./16.





# **DECLARATION ACCOMPANYING YOLNGU NATIONS LETTERSTICK TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

We declare that we have not been conquered.

We declare that to this day we are a sovereign people.

We declare that we are subject to our Maḡayin system of law constituted by the Unseen Creator of the Universe and revealed to the Givers of Law:- Djaṇ'kawu and Barama, and we continue to steward this system through our lawful authorities and government.

Our Maḡayin system of law establishes Mäḡayamirr- peace, order, and good government; is dhapirrk consistant in its statutes; and is assented to by all Yolṅu citizens through the Waṇa Lupthun assent ceremony.

Our Maḡayin system of law is guarded by the Yothu Yindi separation of powers.

Our Maḡayin system of law is a rule of law not a rule of man.

Our Maḡayin system of law is the equal of any other system of law.