



REGISTRAR LAYS CHARGES AGAINST FORMER NATIVE TITLE DIRECTOR

An investigation by the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, Anthony Beven, has led to charges against a former director of the Githabul Nation Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC.

Mr Trevor John Close has been charged with three counts of dishonestly misusing his position as a corporation director to gain an advantage for himself.

It is alleged that Mr Close used the proceeds of sale from a Githabul Nation native title property to pay the rent for his private home in Sydney. It is alleged that two rental payments were made by Mr Close from corporation funds in July 2013 and one in August 2013.

Githabul Nation was incorporated in 2006 and is registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act). It was established to manage the native title rights and interests of the Githabul people of northern New South Wales. On 29 November 2007 the Federal Court made a consent determination recognising the Githabul people's native title rights and interests over 1,120 square kilometres of national parks and state forests around Kyogle in northern New South Wales.

As part of the Githabul native title consent process the New South Wales Government transferred 20 parcels of public land to Githabul Nation. The proceeds of sale that Mr Close is alleged to have misused were from the sale of one of the parcels of land.

Mr Close was a director of the Githabul Nation Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC from May 2009 until July 2014, when the corporation was placed under special administration by the Registrar.

The charges against Mr Close have been laid under section 265-25(3)(a) of the CATSI Act. The section carries a maximum penalty of \$340,000 or imprisonment for five years, or both, for two charges relating to the July 2013 payments and \$360,000 or imprisonment for five years, or both, for one charge for the August 2013 payment.

'Native title rights and interests must be held and used for the benefit of all traditional owners, not one individual,' said Mr Beven. 'My office provides a range of services to native title bodies to improve their governance but will take action when there are failings in that governance.'

Mr Close is due to appear before the Downing Centre Local Court on 2 August 2016.

The Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions is prosecuting the matter.

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