

**Speech by ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver
Wave Hill Walk Off 50th Anniversary
Friday, 19 August 2016**

I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of this land, the Gurindji People and their elders both past and present. I'd like to make a special acknowledgement of the descendants of Vincent Lingiari who are with us today and in particular thank his Great Grandson for his kind gift of song that honoured Vincent Lingiari and the striking workers from Wave Hill.

The ACTU Indigenous Leadership symposium on Wednesday drew great inspiration from it, so thank you.

I must acknowledge the spirit of Vincent Lingiari which is why we are all here today. This great man serves as a shining example of courage, determination and what can be achieved through struggle and solidarity. The Wave Hill Walk Off was a strike that not only inspired union members and leaders at the time but continues to be a reminder to us of how important the struggle for justice and equality is for all working people. What started as a demand for wage justice quickly became the catalyst for the land rights movement which continues to this day.

I am humbled to be able to acknowledge the part played by the union movement 50 years ago in standing in solidarity with the striking Gurindji workers.

From the work of union organizer Dexter Daniels and Gurindji man Lupna Giari (also known as Captain Major) doing 60 meetings along the east coast in five weeks to raise money for the workers and their families, to waterfront worker Brian Manning doing the first of 15 sixteen hundred kilometre trips here from Darwin with supplies and the support of unions such as the Amalgamated Engineers Union that submitted the applications to the then department of interior for, and I quote "The return of Tribal land to Aborigines in Wave Hill-Limbunya area" the Australian Union movement stood shoulder to shoulder with the Gurindji people.

What was achieved by the Wave Hill Walk Off and the many years of struggle and sacrifice that followed was the historic Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976 and the eventual granting of the Gurindji land claim in 1985.

We will always remember the iconic image of Gough Whitlam pouring sand into the hands of Vincent Lingiari in a symbolic gesture of the rights of all indigenous people to this land.

In addition to these important outcomes it also raised the need for wage justice, equality and recognition of Indigenous people. Those wins were a long time in the making and were momentous for Australia. It is humbling to know that we played a part in making it happen then and we know that we have a responsibility to the legacy of those who have come before us to continue the struggle for respect, rights and recognition

The union movement is here not only to celebrate these important wins but to also listen, learn and find ways to work with all people, indigenous and non-indigenous, to close the gap.

We have come from two days in Darwin where the ACTU executive worked with our indigenous brothers and sisters where I listened and learned much on the challenges we still have to overcome.

The past and the present are colliding.

The future must be one where we have reflected on these moments, learned from them and worked together to ensure that Vincent Lingiari's legacy of struggle for justice and equality creates a new understanding of those three "R's"---Respect, Rights and Recognition.

The Union movement has a proud history of solidarity and we are pledged to work together with our indigenous brothers and sisters to make sure that the future is one where Indigenous workers and non-indigenous workers enjoy equitable treatment.