

# Sister is at home on Palm Island

By ALF WILSON



Catholic Franciscan sister Christina McGlynn is held in high regard in the north Queensland Aboriginal community of Palm Island because of her Christian work among the local people. To quote an old saying, 'butter wouldn't melt in the mouth' of

this 66-year-old, who has been on Palm Island for almost two years.

But one thing does get her annoyed. That is when she reads in papers or hears negative things about the island community.

"Like every community, we have our problems, but we just don't hear enough about the good things that are happening here. This is one of the most beautiful places on Earth and the people are wonderful," she told the Koori Mail.

Sr Christina was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and recalls: "I left Scotland in 1964 and spent 10 years nursing in Pakistan, and later five years in Papua New Guinea and two years in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. In 1991 I came to Sydney and finally moved to Palm in March, 2004.

"I go back to visit my family every four to five years, but I will be happy to spend my life here on Palm Island as long as our community has a ministry among the people. I leave that in God's hands."

## Visit

Sister Christina was visiting the recent careers expo at the PCYC building on Palm Island with 81-year-old Catholic priest Father Rod Cameron.

Father Cameron is also a caring person whose ancestors hail from Lochiel, Scotland. He is the acting parish priest in the island church for six months.

"The people here on Palm Island are very good and I enjoy working with them. This employment expo is a very positive thing for the island," he said.

Sister Christina and Father Cameron spoke to Palm Islanders Norris Daphney and Robert Nallajar, who were manning the Ferdie's Rehabilitation Centre stand at the expo.

Mr Daphney later told the Koori Mail that Sister Christina was loved by locals on Palm Island for her Christian work in many facets of life.

"She is very well-respected and does a lot of good things here," he said.

Sister Christina said she considered it a privilege to work with the people on Palm Island and she hoped to continue her work there for many years.

"They are just a special people who have had a lot of suffering in their lives and deserve justice and a peaceful life," she said.



Father Rod Cameron, Norris Daphney, Robert Nallajar and Sister Christina on Palm Island.



'Official recognition': The Ngaanyatjarra Lands native title determination, finalised in June this year, is the country's largest. Ngaanyatjarra Elder Fred Forbes is pictured displaying a ceremonial copy of the determination scroll.

# Another year of milestones

Since January this year, 16 determinations that native title exists have taken effect. In June, the country's biggest determination of native title, over almost 188,000 square kilometres of land in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands of Western Australia, was achieved with the agreement of all parties.

Indigenous land use agreements (ILUA) are also being negotiated around the country, with 225 ILUAs on the register at the end of November – a significant achievement and one that was reached in less than half the time it took to register the first 100.

In May, native title issues were settled over 27 national parks and reserves in the Northern Territory in the biggest simultaneous negotiation of ILUAs in Australia's history.

There have also been developments in the exploration and mining area. In June, traditional landowners in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia celebrated an agreement with the world's largest supplier of diamonds, Argyle Diamonds. The agreement makes a strong statement of mutual respect and will provide jobs and other economic opportunities to local Indigenous groups.

The inaugural Aboriginal Enterprises in Mining and Exploration Conference in November demonstrated the range of business opportunities for Indigenous people in the resources sector, some of which exist because of the native title scheme.

Those achievements are significant. But, as claim groups and other parties to native title proceedings know, there can be many frustrations, costs and delays along the way.

To help solve these problems, the Australian Government announced in

## Native Title and You



With National Native Title Tribunal President GRAEME NEATE

September what Attorney-General Philip Ruddock described as 'a plan for practical reform to improve the performance of the native title system'.

The Government has commissioned a review of the processes for resolving native title claims. It will consider how the National Native Title Tribunal and the Federal Court can work more effectively in managing and resolving native title claims, preferably by agreement.

Last month, options for changes to native title representative bodies and a draft of proposed guidelines for Commonwealth funding of respondent parties were released. Submissions on the guidelines are sought by February 10.

The Government has also published a range of suggested technical amendments to the Native Title Act. Comments on these documents have been sought by January 31.

Judging from the progress made in the past year, 2006 will bring numerous opportunities to meet the many challenges of native title.

Whatever changes are made to the native title system, we look forward to working with all parties in the coming year.

● For further information about possible changes to the native title system see the Office of Indigenous Policy Co-ordination website at [www.oipc.gov.au](http://www.oipc.gov.au) and the Federal Attorney-General's Department website at [www.ag.gov.au/nativetitlesystemreform](http://www.ag.gov.au/nativetitlesystemreform)