



## STATEMENT ON AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS FOR GALARRWUY YUNUPINGU

**Embargoed until 12.00am Sunday 26 January, 2025**

The Yunupingu family, together with the elders of the Gumatj clan, the Yothu Yindi Foundation and the Gumatj Corporation, welcome the awarding of Australia Day honours to the late Yolngu leader, Dr Galarrwuy Yunupingu AC.

Dr Yunupingu AC, who passed away in April 2023, was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia General Division, with effect from 16 February, 2023.

The Companion of the Order of Australia is awarded for “eminent achievement and merit of the highest degree in service to Australia or humanity at large”. It is the highest recognition in the Australian honours system.

Dr Yunupingu AC was Australian of the Year in 1978, and in 1985 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM). In 1998, he was named one of Australia’s National Living Treasures by the National Trust of Australia, and in 2015 he was invested with an Honorary Doctor of Law, University of Melbourne.

He passed surrounded by his extended family, on his land at Gunyangara, from where his identity and wellbeing was derived. He lies in rest overlooking the community at Gunyangara, and his body and spirit is with his ancestors.

His legacy continues to grow.

### **Quotes attributable to daughter Binmila Yunupingu**

A ceremonial leader of the highest degree, my father was our *Dalkarra* (the ceremonial leader of the Gumatj clan), and a *Djungaya* (a leader for his mother clans). He was *gong dhulang* (the holder of our religious designs and icons), and *gong bilma* (the holder of our song-cycles).

Dad was a born leader, and through his life he gained very high ceremonial knowledge, such that his life was spent honoring and guarding our laws and ceremonies, passing them on in perfection to the next generations.

He was also a leader in the non-Yolngu world, establishing and leading the Northern Land Council for three decades. He balanced his world by gaining the influence and education from the *balanda* (non-Yolngu) world, as his vision was about balance and equality. He believed in equal rights for all people no matter what race.

A husband, a grandfather, brother, uncle, but most importantly a strong and loving father to me, he taught me to be a strong woman which I have become today. He influenced me with his powerful leadership and the sharpness of his thinking, telling me to look ahead into the future, to be prepared for what challenges would be awaiting ahead.

At home, he was so different, a loving family man, especially with the little ones surrounding him, he loved us all so much, as we loved him. We miss him so much, but knowing the legacy he has left behind is something that gives our family the courage and strength to keep moving forward, working with my elders, guiding our children, empowering Yolngu to continue his legacy into the future.

**Quotes to attributable to Yothu Yindi Foundation Chairman and Dr Yunupingu AC's brother, Djawa Yunupingu**

I want to acknowledge my late brother for what he did for his family, for the Yolngu people of East Arnhem Land, and for Australia.

First and always he was my big brother. He cared for me, guided me, and loved me, like he did all his brothers and sisters.

In ceremonies he was our Dalkarra. Our highest and most respected ceremonial leader and a ceremonial leader for both Yirritja and Dhuwa clans. To me he was the leader of all leaders.

He was a Yolngu man, an Australian – being born from the very bones of the country, he has now returned to our land, to be with our ancestors. He taught us to take our part in the world and to act seriously as Yolngu people – that we are of this country and the country is of us.

My brother was a family man. He told us to never forget who you are, or where you come from. He told us that the most important thing in life was family.

On behalf of his remaining brothers Balupalu, Nungki, Nalkuma, Djakapurra and Gunanydji, and our last two sisters, Dela and Djakangu, we thank the Order of Australia for recognising our brother, and remember him with respect and love on this day.

**Quotes attributable to Yothu Yindi Foundation CEO Denise Bowden**

I am really fortunate to have been guided by the insight and wisdom of our former Chairman, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, and I'm thrilled his lifetime of achievements is being acknowledged with Australia's highest honour.

Over two decades, I observed in his characteristics the combination of strong leadership, quiet diplomacy, and an unwavering determination. He was a man well ahead of his time, and his

vision and foresight continues to unfold today in the region and beyond.

Galarrwuy had many wonderful traits, as a person and leader. I admired the way he owned his inspirational and complex visions for his community; he stayed the journey and never deviated off course, regardless of the many challenges placed before him or the time it took us all to catch up to his insights.

His resolve was an anchor point for the Yothu Yindi Foundation, and continues to guide us in all the work we do.

### **Quotes attributable to Gumatj Corporation CEO Klaus Helms**

GY, as I knew him, was my mentor, my friend and my Chairman.

His wisdom gave me inspiration and direction. His leadership and knowledge not only helped develop the Gumatj Corporation into the company we run today, but laid a pathway for his people for their future.

His friendship will always be etched in my mind as we carry the Gumatj business and flag forward.

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**\* Please note that the family has given permission for Dr Yunupingu AC to be referred to by his full name, and for his image to be used.**