

Media Statement

Klynton Wanganeen
Commissioner for
Aboriginal Engagement

8 October 2010

Aboriginal Communities within South Australia today farewelled Mr Kunmanara Windlass an Aboriginal Elder and leader of the peoples of Oak Valley and Yalata for over 25 years.

Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement, Klynton Wanganeen said the communities were deeply saddened to hear of the loss of Mr Windlass.

“He was a true community leader - a passionate, articulate and informed representative of his people who was the focal point for discussion and decision-making,” said Mr Wanganeen.

Mr Windlass was part of a delegation - which included the late Dr Archie Barton, Kunmanara Mervin Day and Barker Bryant - that travelled to London to seek compensation from the British government for the damage done to their country by the atomic tests carried out at Maralinga in the 1950s.

Mr Windlass was in Koonibba when the bomb was detonated and he heard the explosion while on the phone at the mission.

He also worked closely with the late Dr Barton to advocate for land rights.

“Mr Windlass addressed the many obstacles that his people and his generation faced, including the removal from country before the destruction caused by the atomic bomb blasts,” said Mr Wanganeen.

“He and his community returned to their homelands at Oak Valley in the 1980s when the government handed back the land to its traditional owners.”

“His last official duty for Maralinga Tjarutja was on 18 December 2009 when he raised the Aboriginal flag at Maralinga Village to mark its hand back by the Commonwealth.”

Mr Wanganeen extends his sincerest condolences to the family, extended family and all the people of Oak Valley, Yalata, Ceduna and the West Coast.

Mr Windlass' funeral will be held at Yalata today.