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Passing of Wik elders

It was with sadness that Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) learnt of the recent passing of three elders from the Cape York community of Aurukun.

One of the elders, Mrs Tybingoompa, became famous as a plaintiff of the successful Wik Native Title judgment handed down by the High Court in December 1996.

ANTaR National Director, Gary Highland, said Mrs Tybingoompa was an inspiration to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

“Mrs Tybingoompa spoke and danced with Senator Brian Harradine at ANTaR’s first Sea of Hands event outside Parliament House in Canberra,” Mr Highland said.

“From the time she left Aurukun to go to boarding school and then returned to teach in her community, Mrs Tybingoompa fought for the rights of the Wik people and Aboriginal people around Australia.”

“Her death at only 59 from a diabetes related illness highlights the ongoing tragedy of Indigenous health in this country,” he said.

Mr Highland said that while Mrs Tybingoompa was the most well known of the three elders, the passing of Mr Chevathun and Mrs Wolmby would have also had a devastating impact on the community.

“Our thoughts and prayers are very much with the families of Mrs Tybingoompa, Mr Chevathun and Mrs Wolmby and the community of Aurukun,” Mr Highland said.

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