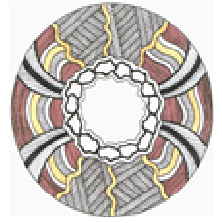




Joint Statement

From the Office of the Attorney-General
and Gunditjmara Native Title Group



Wednesday, 21 March 2007

AGREEMENT REACHED ON GUNDITJMARA NATIVE TITLE CLAIM

The Bracks Government and the Gunditjmara people of South West Victoria have reached an historic agreement to settle the Gunditjmara's native title claims, the Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, and Chairman of the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Damien Bell announced today.

Mr Hulls said that under the proposed agreement, the State and the Gunditjmara have agreed to jointly approach the Federal Court to formally recognise Gunditjmara native title rights on Crown lands and waters within the claim area.

The Court will consider the request on 30 March 2007.

"This is an historic in-principle agreement that will recognise the Gunditjmara people's continuing connection to country," Mr Hulls said.

"It has been eleven years since the original claim was lodged with the Federal Court. Gunditjmara people look forward to the hearing on 30 March in the expectation that our native title will finally be recognised," Mr Bell said.

Implementation of the agreement between the State and the Gunditjmara is subject to the signing of Consent Orders by all other respondents to the claim and, importantly, the Federal Court's final determination of the Gunditjmara claims on 30 March 2007.

The Gunditjmara Native Title Claim Area covers approximately 140,000 hectares of Crown lands and waters in the Portland region of south-western Victoria. All parties with interests in the claim area have been consulted and are protected under the proposed terms of the agreement between the State and the Gunditjmara.

The claim does not cover or affect any freehold land in the area.

"I look forward to the consent determination as another step towards land justice for the Indigenous people of Victoria," Mr Hulls said.

"We are extremely proud to be finally recognised as native title holders by the State of Victoria." Mr Bell said.

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