



10th Annual
NATIVE TITLE CONFERENCE 2009
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MEDIA RELEASE

Conference explores Aboriginal land justice in Victoria

With Victoria considering historic native title reforms, the Chairman of Native Title Services Victoria (NTSV) Graham Atkinson will deliver a timely speech on land justice for Aboriginal Victorians at the 10th annual Native Title Conference in Melbourne tomorrow (Thursday 4 June).

A Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta man, Mr Atkinson will talk about *Land justice in Victoria* ahead of a speech by Victorian Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, The Hon. Robert Hulls MP – both to be delivered at the at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

The conference is hosted by the Wurundjeri people and convened jointly by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and NTSV. AIATSIS Chairperson, Professor Mick Dodson worked with Mr Atkinson and others on the State Government's *Steering Committee for the Development of a Victorian Native Title Settlement Framework* that recommended alternative settlement options in a report to Cabinet in December last year.

"The Steering Committee's recommendations, currently before the State Government, are fundamental to reconciliation in Victoria and have the potential to lead the national native title agenda," Professor Dodson said.

"Less than one per cent of Victoria is declared native title. Victorian Aboriginal people were displaced on a large scale and the current Federal native title system makes it difficult for traditional owners to establish their native title rights."

Under the proposed new framework, the State Government could negotiate directly with traditional owner groups out of court, enabling quicker and more constructive settlements.

"These reforms would mean a symbolic and a landmark, historical moment for traditional owners who have been asking for a covenant for 200 years," Professor Dodson said.

Mr Atkinson's speech will reflect on the land justice movement in Victoria from early settlement to the current political and social situation and implications for the future.

On Friday, Chairperson of the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA) and winner of the 2008 Human Rights Medal, Mr Les Malezer will deliver the annual Mabo Lecture at the conference, followed by an address from the Commonwealth Attorney-General, The Hon Robert McClelland MP.

Media contact: Chris Ryan on 0408 688 026.

MEDIA REGISTRATION - To register for one or more of the three public sessions during the Native Title Conference please contact AIATSIS Director of Public Affairs, Suzi Clark, on (02) 6261 4254 or 0419 978 035 or suzi.clark@aiatsis.gov.au