



Native Title Services Victoria Ltd

MEDIA RELEASE

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Meeting on Indigenous land justice a success

An historic meeting of Traditional Owners of Victoria was an outstanding success, with the meeting endorsing a Statement calling on the State Government to consider a raft of land justice measures, the Chairman of Native Title Services Victoria (NTSV)*, Graham Atkinson, said today.

The Statement, endorsed by delegates from 20 Traditional Owner groups, was presented in person to the Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gavin Jennings, at the meeting on Friday.

The Statement also calls on the State Government to commit to a process of negotiation with the Traditional Owners of Victoria. At the meeting, Mr Hulls agreed to meet further with a delegation of Traditional Owners to take the discussion forward.

NTSV facilitated the meeting which was the first time in Victoria that the first nations have met together to discuss matters of concern with regard to land justice and related issues, including the protection of cultural heritage. The delegates developed their preferred model for a new cultural heritage protection regime which recognises their unique rights as Traditional Owners.

To date there have been very limited native title outcomes in Victoria. "NTSV is trying to encourage the State to consider a wide range of options to settle native title claims which could also resolve the underlying land justice issues which have never been addressed in this State," said Mr Atkinson.

Mr Atkinson said NTSV welcomes Mr Hulls' announcement at the meeting that a review of the way in which the State Government manages native title processes would be carried out by a senior independent native title consultant.

"We commend the Minister for taking this step with a view to getting expert advice about how to resolve the delays in settling native title claims in this State," said Mr Atkinson.

Mr Atkinson supported the call by Traditional Owners that a State-wide initiative must be pursued by the State Government to deliver land justice to Traditional Owners.

"The State must recognise that the settling of native title claims in Victoria is vitally linked to land justice and to the way in which land and resource management occurs."

Mr Atkinson said following on from the achievements of the meeting, NTSV looked forward to assisting Traditional Owners to work with both Ministers to achieve real outcomes this year.

To arrange media interviews, contact Paul Conroy on 0418 371099. A copy of the Statement endorsed in-principle by Traditional Owner Groups in Victoria is available upon request.

*Native Title Services Victoria Ltd was formed in August 2003, for the specific purpose of providing high quality professional services to native title claimant groups in Victoria. As such, it performs the functions of a Native Title Representative Body, as set out in the *Native Title Act* (C'th) 1993.