

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 28 May 2004

2004 Native Title Conference: It Matters for all Australians

The most important annual event for the collective discussion of Australian native title issues will be held at the Stamford Grand Hotel in Glenelg (Adelaide) next week.

More than 400 people including native title holders, academics, legal counsel and government representatives are expected to attend the 2004 Native Title Conference from 3-4 June.

UN special rapporteur on Indigenous issues Prof. Dr Erica-Irene Daes, Canadian Indigenous lawyer and scholar Professor John Borrows, the Attorney General the Hon Phillip Ruddock, Maori lawyer Mr Moana Jackson, and Mrs Bonita Mabo are amongst the national and international speakers scheduled for the event.

The conference is being convened by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement of SA's Native Title Unit.

AIATSIS Chairman, Professor Dodson, and Executive Officer of ALRM's Native Title Unit, Parry Agius, called upon conference delegates to actively participate in setting the agenda for genuine change in native title practices in Australia.

"It has now been twelve years since the Mabo decision. The ongoing erosion of the potential for rights recognition established in this case is something that must be viewed with concern," Professor Dodson and Mr Agius said.

"Collectively, we must find a way to bring social justice back into the native title process. The title of this year's conference *Building Relationships: It's the people that Matter. It's the People that Make it Work* points us in the direction required to achieve this task, and at the same time reminds us of what is at stake.

"If Indigenous people of this country are to gain lasting and concrete native title rights, then the necessity to build strong relationships is critical. It matters for all Australians that native title works."

The first day of the conference will coincide with Mabo Day, 3 June. The widow of the late Eddie Mabo, Mrs Bonita Mabo, will introduce the annual Mabo Lecture by John Borrows, Professor and Law Foundation Chair of Aboriginal Law and Justice at the University of Victoria Law School in British Columbia and member of the Chippewa of the Nawash First Nation in Ontario.

The Native Title Conference, 3-4 June 2004, Adelaide
Building Relationships: It's the People that Matter. It's the People that Make it Work

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The conference will be preceded by a day of workshops for Native Title Representative Bodies, and will include separate youth and Indigenous forums.

Media Attendance at the 2004 Native Title Conference

All conference delegates must be registered.

To register to attend the conference plenary sessions detailed below, media representatives should contact Kirstie Parker of AIATSIS on (0412) 646 926 or Lesley Johns of ALRM of (0412) 583 577. From Wednesday 2 June onwards, contact can also be made via the conference secretariat office on (08) 8375 0694.

Access to other conference sessions must be negotiated in advance. For more information on the conference program, visit the conference website at www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/ntru/conf2004.

Media should report to the conference registration desk to collect media passes.

CONFERENCE PLENARY SESSIONS

Thursday, 3 June, 9 - 10.30am

Opening Plenary

Chair: Professor Mick Dodson, Chairperson AIATSIS

Native title holders of South Australia

Ian Crombie

Mabo Lecture

(With introductory comment by Mrs Bonita Mabo)

Practical Re-colonisation: Indigenous Rights and Equality

Professor John Borrows

Anishnabe, University of Victoria (Canada)

Friday, 3 June, 9 - 10.30am

Plenary: Government Approaches to Native Title

The Government's approach to native title

The Hon Philip Ruddock

Attorney General, Commonwealth

International developments in recognition of Indigenous peoples' relationship with land and permanent sovereignty over natural resources

Prof Dr Erica Irene Daes

UN Special Rapporteur

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