

12.30pm, Monday 15th August 2011

The Mabo Room, AIATSIS, Lawson Crescent, Canberra ACT 2601

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Indigenous home ownership: Whose dreaming or whose nightmare?

Ed Wensing

A stated objective of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is the progressive resolution of land tenure on remote community-titled land in order to “*secure government and commercial investment, economic development opportunities and home ownership possibilities in economically sustainable communities*”. Existing tenure arrangements in remote communities are understood to be an obstacle to the expansion of the Commonwealth’s home ownership program, since community-titled land lacks the planning sub-division and fungibility necessary for the provision of individual titles to land that would enable prospective home owners to use their title, and the housing asset on it, as security against a loan. This paper discusses the origins of the Federal Government’s push for land tenure reform to enable home ownership in remote Indigenous communities and explores some difficult questions that need to be taken into consideration.

Ed Wensing is strategic planner and policy analyst and is currently an Associate Director of SGS Economic and Planning, based in their Canberra office. Over the past 15 years, Ed has worked extensively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities around Australia on a range of matters including native title, land tenure, housing, cultural heritage, and natural resource management. He is best known for his work for the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) developing a number of key native title resources for Local Government (*‘Working with native title’* and *‘Working out Agreements’*) and for conducting a nation-wide training program assisting local Councils to integrate native title and heritage considerations into Council processes. Ed has recently updated these resources for the National Native Title Tribunal and the Australian Local Government Association.

Ed has also worked in academia as a researcher and lecturer for a number of universities, including the ANU, Griffith University, UNSW and more recently the University of Canberra. In 1999, Ed developed a full semester course on *‘Planning with Native Title’* for Griffith University and conducted this course for five years. It remains the only such full semester course in the University Planning Schools in Australia. Ed is a Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia and a member of the Institute’s Indigenous Planning Working Group (IPWG), which has developed the Institute’s Reconciliation Action Plan and in October 2010 released a Discussion Paper on *‘Improving Planners’ Understanding of Aboriginal and Torres strait islander Australians and Recommendations for Reforming Planning Education Curricula for PIA Accreditation’*. (<http://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/2381>)

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