

## **AGREEMENTS**

### **Northern Territory**

#### **Adelaide-to-Darwin Railway**

In the first native title agreement negotiated with the Northern Territory Government, Aboriginal people have signed over land to be used by the Adelaide-to-Darwin railway. The Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council agreed to a \$10 million compensation package in return for the 100m wide and 1385km long strip of land. (*CT, 12 Feb, p2*)\*

## **AMENDMENTS**

### **National**

A report prepared by the Indigenous Law Centre, says changes to native title legislation and to policies on Indigenous affairs have left Australia in breach of its international treaty obligations. The report, commissioned by ATSIC, has gone to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which asked the Australian Government to report after concern was raised over developments in the areas of native title and social justice. Australia submits periodic reports to CERD, the last report being in 1994. The ATSIC submission to the UN also reports on other developments since 1994, saying that the social justice package process has been abandoned and the policy of self-determination has been jettisoned. The submission says that the Federal Government has also failed to show leadership in deferring to the States and Territories and passing significant responsibilities, such as native title, to them. It also criticised the Government for not having made any appointment to the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner since January 1998.

The full ATSIC submission is available from ATSIC's website: <http://www.atsic.gov.au> (*ATSIC Media Release, 18 Feb*)\*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Minister, Mr John Herron, has announced the areas proposed for which eligible organisations will be invited to apply for recognition as Native Title Representative Bodies. Under the amended NTA, the Minister is required to decide on the areas before issuing invitations to interested organisations to apply for recognition. Mr Herron has called for submissions on the proposed boundaries by 12 March and expects to make a final decision by the end of March.

The boundaries create the areas over which Representative Bodies, such as existing Indigenous land councils and organisations, will have the responsibility for handling native title processes.

Information and maps about the proposed areas can be obtained by contacting ATSIC on 02 6289 3485 or 02 6289 3531. (*Senator John Herron, Media Release, 19 Feb*)\*

### **Western Australia**

The Western Australian Government and the Labor Opposition are negotiating a compromise on the Government's proposed native title legislation. The talks were initiated by the Labor Party. According to *The Australian*, the deal would enable passage of the Government's Validation Bill with the Government accepting amendment to exclude historical leases from