

ment with an opportunity to mediate native title and non-native title issues with one claimant group. Mr Pearce said it was now time for the State Government to realise that a single claim existed.

He explained, "What Noongars are saying is that they don't want their claims run individually, but as a single claim. This provides opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous parties to benefit from a process that delivers many economies of scale."

"It seems the Government is ignoring the express wishes of native title claimants in the south west – wishes that were legally authorised through a series of properly constituted community meetings."

Despite the State Government's 'Statement of Commitment to a new and Just Relationship', Mr Pearce questioned the stated preference for negotiating with native title claimants, rather than proceeding to litigation. He said while the Government "constantly talks about wanting to negotiate with native title claimants...in private the Office of Native Title is doing the exact opposite. Since May last year the Office of Native Title has walked away from every opportunity for mediation. Noongar claimants are willing to sit down and talk as a single group. We desperately need a sign from the Government that they are also willing to do so."

However, the State Government recently withdrew its offer to mediate on the south west claims before the Federal Court. While the Western Australia Government suggested the Combined Metro claim be run separately to the rest of the single claim, this effectively ignored SWALSC's own consultation processes. While the Government insisted on a deadline of a matter of days, consultations to endorse a single claim policy had taken weeks of meetings. These followed months of preparation after an agreement in principle was reached more than a year prior to this. It is unfortunate that the State Government effectively pressured SWALSC to act independently of native title claimant's instructions, something Mr Pearce said SWALSC could not do. This highlights the pressure placed on Indigenous

processes when they are expected to fall into line with externally produced timeframes.

Native Title Research and Access

by Grace Koch, NTRU

Each year many individual researchers and Native Title Representative Bodies contact AIATSIS in order to locate relevant library and archival material in preparing native title claims. Requests may be made by Institute visitors and remote clients. The Native Title Research and Access Officer (NTRAO) offers a range of services to help clients find what they need at the Institute.

Clients beginning their research

At the beginning, it is necessary to get all of the facts together about the claim, such as the geographical spread of the claim, names of claimants and related family groups, language groups, and any historical detail about removals, missions, reserves and/or other relevant information. These will give the search terms necessary when looking up information on the Institute's on-line catalogue.

Clients will find listings of most of the Institute's materials on the MURA catalogue which is accessible both on the Internet and on computer terminals in-house. Alternatively, a list of search terms can be sent to the NTRAO, who can prepare a listing of all relevant material. The service is free of charge for up to 200 citations. Some material from the Audiovisual Archive is not yet listed on the Web catalogue; however the NTRAO has access to all listings and can make a comprehensive search. The completed searches can be posted or sent via email.

Some of the material may be restricted by the depositor for a variety of reasons, such as cultural sensitivity or pending publication, and such restrictions, where they exist, are shown for each catalogue entry. Although it is the client's responsibility to contact depositors and to arrange permissions to view, listen to or copy any restricted material, the

NTRAO can assist in providing addresses and other contact details to help in arranging for clearances.

Print collections

Once relevant material has been identified, it may be accessed at the Institute free of charge or copies may be made for a fee. Copies must be made in accordance with the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) and within the conditions of access as set by the depositors. A large proportion of the Library's holdings are in the form of published material available in the open stacks; however there is a considerable collection of original manuscripts, rare books, personal papers, microfilm, rare serials and language materials held in a closed room. The NTRAO can assist clients in gaining access to this material; however it is best to request such information in advance by email or by phone before visiting the Institute.

Audiovisual collections

Native Title researchers can find much valuable documentation for their claims within the Audiovisual Archives. Recording and images can show important aspects of land ownership and tenure. Listings of much of this material is available on the Web-based catalogue; contact the NTRAO for complete searches of this material. Visitors and remote clients can order up to 50 images or 15 tapes per request. Copies of film and video holdings can be arranged with the NTRAO. Researchers visiting the Institute should make an appointment to view or to listen to the material in-house.

To contact the Native Title Research and Access Officer, Grace Koch phone 02 6246 1103, fax 02 6249 7714 or email <grace.koch@aiatsis.gov.au>.

NATIVE TITLE IN THE NEWS

Native Title News now contains, where applicable, the application numbers for native title claims mentioned in the news. Following the news summary is the NNTT Application number and the Federal Court number.

National

Mining giant Rio Tinto has called upon the Commonwealth Government to increase funding for Native Title Representative Bodies. Rio Tinto stated one of the main impediments to native title was inadequate resources for representative bodies. It called on the Federal Government to review what they feel is a funding imbalance. Rio Tinto also repeated concerns previously raised by ATSIC that representative bodies had not been granted any additional funding since 1996, and that this funding was vital to obtaining determinations. *ABC Online*, 21 February 2003.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory has agreed to release up to 60 lots of land in the Larapinta area in conjunction with the Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation. Lhere Artepe Chairperson Brian Stirling said the Arrente native title holders had waited along time for this decision and for something real to come out of native title. Stirling explained that a lot of hard work had gone into achieving this outcome and that overall everyone was very pleased. It provides the first opportunity for the Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation to work with the Government and establishes a new direction for development in the Alice Springs area. Sacred sites are now able to be protected as the blocks can not be sold. He concluded by saying that the corporation was looking forward to working with other organisations in the area and that it was a new beginning for all involved. *Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation*, 11 March 2003.