

Annual Native Title Conference 2009 Spirit of Country: Land, Water, Life

By Cynthia Ganesharajah, Research Officer NTRU

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and Native Title Services Victoria (NTSV) invite registrations for the 2009 Native Title Conference to be held in Melbourne, from Wednesday 3 June to Friday 5 June 2009. The Conference will be hosted by the Wurundjeri people.

The Native Title Conference is now in its tenth year! Over the past ten years the Conference has provided invaluable opportunities for networking, information sharing and capacity development between staff and council of the native title representative bodies, native title claimants and holders, their legal counsel, native title practitioners such as anthropologists, government institutions and departments, politicians, judges, academics and Indigenous community members.

The theme in 2009 is Spirit of Country: Land, Water, Life. The focus of the Conference will be on responding to the rights and aspirations of Traditional Owners in a way that secures the long term economic and social benefits for Indigenous communities.

Les Malezer will deliver the annual Mabo Lecture. As with previous conferences, there will be Indigenous Talking Circles. The first day of the Conference offers pre-conference workshops for native title representative bodies, service providers and native title groups. The second and third days are open to the public. The programs are available at:
<http://ntru.aiatsis.gov.au/conf2009/NativeTitleConference2009/program.html>

The Native Title Conference remains the largest Indigenous policy conference in Australia.

For further information please visit our website:
<http://ntru.aiatsis.gov.au/conf2009/NativeTitleConference2009/index.html>

Additional Funding for Native Title System

By Cynthia Ganesharajah, Research Officer NTRU

In this year's Budget an additional \$50.1 million will be provided over four years to build a more efficient native title system. This funding was allocated in response to the recommendations of a review of funding for the native title system in 2008 which found that the system required additional funding to function effectively.

The additional funding includes \$45.8 million to improve the capacity of Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) to represent native title claimants and holders. A further \$4.3 million will be allocated to improving claims resolution by working with State and Territory Governments to develop new approaches to the settlement of claims through negotiated agreements.

The additional funding has three key aims. First, to ensure the native title system focuses on achieving resolution through agreement-making rather than costly and protracted litigation. Second, to aid NTRBs in the provision of services to meet the needs of native title claimant groups, and to negotiate agreements that ensure sustainable long term economic and social benefits for Indigenous Australians. Finally, it is hoped that providing extra support to the native title system will help the Government close the gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians.

The funding marks a new Government focus on a more flexible and less legalistic approach to native title, where the focus is on negotiated agreements that provide a range of benefits to traditional owners

This information is taken from a Government media release: R McClelland (Attorney General) and J Macklin (Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs), *Additional \$50 million for native title system*, media release, 12 May 2009.