MEDIA STATEMENT - THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2009

TRADITIONAL OWNER CONCERN OVER NATIVE TITLE FUNDING

The Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group (VTOLJG) expressed concern today that the Native Title Settlement Framework is in jeopardy as a result of disagreement over funding between the State and Commonwealth Governments.

Mr Graham Atkinson, Co-Chair of the Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group said today "The Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group spent 12 months negotiating this new and innovative approach with the State government. The Commonwealth has declared its support for broad land settlement approaches such as this. Traditional owners are now ready to negotiate better outcomes, but the Commonwealth is denying funding support.

"We support the Deputy Premier Rob Hulls' call for the Commonwealth to uphold their native title responsibility and come to an equitable cost-sharing arrangement with the Victorian Government.

"The Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group remains fully committed to working with Victorian Government on the implementation of the Native Title Settlement Framework, which provides real land justice for Victorian traditional owners. It is a better way of resolving native title in Victoria, in the interests of all Victorians. We remain of the view that negotiated agreements between the State Government and traditional owner groups are a better alternative than the Federal Court process.

"We are proud of our efforts to bring stakeholders together in the development of this Framework for the ultimate benefit of all Victorians, and encourage the Commonwealth to make good on its funding commitment for this ground breaking initiative.

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