

Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group

Media Statement

5 August 2005

The Victorian government is yet to respond adequately to the dispossession of Victorian Aboriginal people from their country. Native Title alone is clearly inadequate to address all the needs, aspirations, rights and interests of Victorian Aboriginal people in relation to land and waters.

A February 2005 meeting of traditional owners from across Victoria resolved to form the Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group. This group is authorized by the traditional owners of Victoria to engage with the State Government about a state-wide land justice framework and proposed new legislative arrangements for the regulation of cultural heritage.

The government has already been presented with a Statement of Principles that should inform a land justice settlement. That statement was adopted by the February meeting of traditional owners.

The government has indicated its willingness to engage with traditional owners in relation to this document.

The Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group is ready to engage with the State to progress these principles.

This meeting of the Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group has resolved that as a first step, the group wishes to meet with the Premier and relevant Ministers within the next six weeks to discuss a process for engagement.

It is hoped that this process for engagement will set in place machinery to deal with the key elements contained in the February Statement of Principles.

The Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group invites the Premier to commit the government to an engagement process.

It is clear to this group that a future engagement process over land justice and cultural heritage issues for Victorian traditional owners requires adequate resources. The Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group strongly urges the government to make available the necessary financial and other resources to ensure the effective participation of all traditional owners in these processes.

This group has instructed Native Title Services Victoria Ltd to pursue the issue of resources with the government.

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