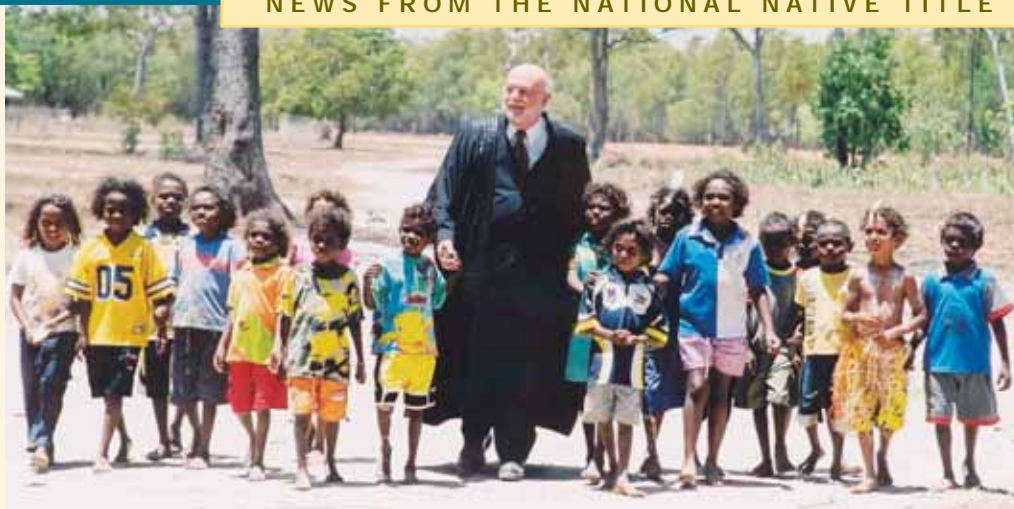


# TALKING NATIVE TITLE

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL NATIVE TITLE TRIBUNAL



Children take a walk with Justice Cooper through Aurukun community after he handed down the consent determination recognising the Wik and Wik Way peoples' native title rights.

## Wik and Wik Way peoples make native title history — again

**Gladys Tybingoompa of the Wik and Wik Way peoples summed up the outcome of 10 years of native title negotiations in a few words: 'today we have made history'.**

It was 13 October 2004 — a day that, as Gladys said, the Wik and Wik Way peoples will always remember. The place was Aurukun, a town on the west coast of Queensland's Cape York Peninsula.

Justice Richard Cooper of the Federal Court had just made two native title consent determinations recognising the Wik and Wik Way peoples' native title rights and interests over 12,530 square kilometres, the majority of the claimed area on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula.

It wasn't the first time that the Wik and Wik Way peoples had made history. Their native title claim had led to an historic High Court decision in 1996 which found that native title may coexist on some pastoral leases. Since this time, pastoralists and native title claimants around Australia have been negotiating agreements about how they can work together to exercise their rights.

The 13 October determinations were the first native title consent determinations to be made over pastoral leases in Queensland. The Wik and Wik Way peoples' claim covered pastoral leases, Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) land, Aboriginal land lease land, unallocated state land and certain other lease areas. The parties with interests in the claimed areas included pastoralists,

state, federal and local governments, Indigenous groups, fishers and those with infrastructure interests.

John Frazer, of Strathburn Station, said the ruling had brought certainty to all parties. He said that through the negotiations friendships had been built between the pastoralists and the native title claimants and therefore the process worked.

Tribunal member, Graham Fletcher, said that as a result of the High Court's Wik decision in 1996 native title claimants and pastoralists across Australia had been negotiating indigenous land use agreements, access agreements and memoranda of understandings to clarify how they could exercise their rights over pastoral lease land under a native title claim. The first native title consent determination over pastoral lease land to be made in Australia was the second part of the Karajarri people's native

title claim in the Kimberley, Western Australia. The Federal Court handed down that determination on 8 September 2004.

'Agreements help parties develop a better understanding of each other's rights and interests to achieve mutually agreeable native title and related outcomes,' he said.

For the Wik and Wik Way peoples the negotiating is not over yet. There are still four pastoral leases amounting to about 5,200 square kilometres under claim yet to be agreed upon. There is also a second Wik application, that commenced in September 2001 over Comalco's bauxite mining leases south of the Embley River (about 1,600 square kilometres), which will remain in mediation.

For more details on the determination go to the Tribunal's website at [www.nntt.gov.au](http://www.nntt.gov.au) ■

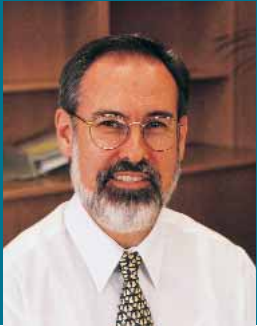
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Photos in this issue courtesy of: Queensland State Government (p. 3), Central Land Council (p. 5), Newcrest Mining (p. 7) and Tribunal staff.

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# From the President

## **We tend to think of native title achievements and challenges from a local perspective.**

Occasionally it's good to step back and look at developments from a national perspective, to identify trends in native title law and practice. Each year we take stock of progress when preparing the Tribunal's annual report. The 2003–2004 Annual Report was tabled in Federal Parliament in November.

Native title is not just of interest locally and nationally. People in other countries are also interested in what is happening in Australia.

In October, Tribunal Deputy President Fred Chaney made a presentation to the Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association conference in Yellowknife, Canada. He spoke about developments in Australia in native title and reconciliation. Mr Chaney talked about new kinds of agreements and the context in which they are being negotiated. During that session Aboriginal academic Professor Marcia Langton and Simon Nish, the participation agreement manager of Argyle Diamonds in Western Australia, also delivered presentations. Argyle Diamonds and the traditional owners of the Argyle mining lease area signed an important indigenous land use agreement and management plan agreement in September. Fred Chaney and Simon Nish were directly involved in the negotiations that led to the agreement and relayed their experiences to this international audience.

The Inaugural Global Sustainable Development conference in October also included presentations by Indigenous speakers and me on native title and related issues.

In November, I was honoured to speak at the 5th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Rome. The theme was 'A world united or a world divided? Multi-ethnicity, human rights and terrorism'. One session was devoted to native peoples' rights and focussed on the case of the Mapuches of

Patagonia. My paper outlined the implications of British colonisation on the development of land rights and native title laws, and noted some of the outcomes achieved under those laws. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been granted title to some 1.1 million square kilometres of land (just over 14 per cent of the area of Australia) under various land rights laws. Native title has been determined to just over 450,000 square kilometres or 5.7 per cent of Australia. Indigenous Australians are now involved in many more negotiations than a decade ago.

Such international forums provide opportunities to assess what has been achieved in the past decade and to look at how best to work in the years ahead. Although there are many challenges to face (including resolving about 620 claimant and non-claimant native title applications), the recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights to land is now part of the legal and social landscape of the nation. We have processes in place for dealing with issues as they arise, and can build on a decade of experience in agreement-making and court decisions to develop just, agreed and enduring outcomes.

In the past year alone, there has been significant progress. Agreements have been reached between Indigenous groups and pastoralists, including the first two Federal Court consent determinations over pastoral land. The consent determination of the second part of the Karjarri people's native title claim in the Kimberley region of Western Australia was the first of its type in Australia. It was followed by the determination of the majority of the Wik and Wik Way peoples' claim in north Queensland.

Five memoranda of understanding have been signed by pastoralists and the Ewamian people of north Queensland. Australia's largest beef company AACo and the

Waluwarra/Georgina River people, also of north Queensland, signed a MoU that settles access and traditional activities over AACo's flagship cattle station. In the Goldfields of Western Australia a set of pastoral principles guide pastoralists and Indigenous groups in agreement-making. South Australia's first ILUA over a pastoral property was signed this year.

There have been developments in the exploration and mining area. Regional heritage protection agreements have been reached in Western Australia that aim to streamline the agreement-making process between the resources industry and native title claimant groups. Nine pro forma agreements were negotiated between the Victoria Government, Indigenous groups and industry that are being used as the basis of future act agreements in that state.

In the last financial year there was a 24 per cent increase in the number of indigenous land use agreements (ILUAs) registered by the Tribunal.

This issue of *Talking Native Title* provides recent examples of how groups throughout Australia have reached agreements, and of the recognition of some of those achievements.

*The papers mentioned above, and the Tribunal's 2003–2004 Annual Report, can be viewed on the Tribunal's website at [www.nntt.gov.au](http://www.nntt.gov.au).*

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*Talking Native Title* by  
completing the readership  
survey (inserted in print  
copies or available online  
at [www.nntt.gov.au](http://www.nntt.gov.au)).**

Left to right: Mal Greirson Jonathan Fulcher, Patrick Walsh, Arthur Johnson, Graham Sauney, Eddy Smallwood, Hon Peter Beattie and Graeme Hogarth.



## North Queensland groups win reconciliation award

**It took nine Indigenous groups and a major energy corporation only 14 months to negotiate three indigenous land use agreements in North Queensland in 2003.**

During that time they decided how the North Queensland Gas Pipeline Project group would proceed with plans to construct a 390-kilometre pipeline from Moranbah to Townsville while protecting the cultural heritage for the nine Indigenous groups. They also succeeded in developing a cultural heritage management plan.

Through their cooperative approach they developed relationships that are a foundation for any future work they do together.

Their efforts, cooperation and resultant success were recognised at the Queensland Government reconciliation awards ceremony in Brisbane on 28 October when they won the Reconciliation Award for Business in the 'Joint Ventures' category.

Representatives of the Jangga, Wiri, Wulgurukaba, Juru, Barada Barna Kabalbara and Yetimarla, Bindal, Birri and Kudjala peoples and the inland Nebo Group and Enertrade attended the ceremony to receive the award from Queensland Premier Peter Beattie.

Tribunal member, Graham Fletcher, assisted the groups through the development of the agreement.

He said the award recognised the cooperative approach the groups had taken

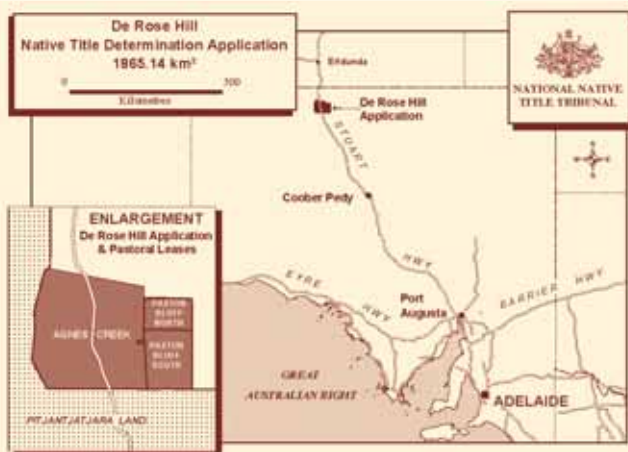
to ensuring their rights and aspirations regarding the area traversed by the pipeline were accounted for.

'The native title process encourages people to find common ground and these groups chose to negotiate under this process,' he said. 'As a result they have formed positive relationships based on trust and respect.'

'It is positive to note that several of the projects among the awards' finalists related to native title.'

Mr Beattie said there had been an outstanding response to the awards, with nominations from a variety of projects.

'They are all very high quality and share one thing in common — their commitment to the reconciliation process in Queensland.' ■



## De Rose Hill back before Full Federal Court

whether a native title claimant group from the Yankunytjatjara people in South Australia has native title rights and interests over a 1,856-

square-kilometre area of land and waters in the far north-west of the state. The area concerned covers the De Rose Hill pastoral station which is made up of three pastoral leases.

In a previous decision on 1 November 2002, Justice Maurice O'Loughlin found that the claimant group had lost their spiritual and

physical connection to the claimed area which covers the De Rose Hill station.

On behalf of the native title claimants, the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement lodged an appeal against the Federal Court's decision on the basis that Justice O'Loughlin had approached the question of connection incorrectly. The Full Court then called for further detailed submissions from the parties on several questions regarding connection.

With the passing of the deadline for final submissions, the matter has been listed for hearing on 13 December. ■

**The first native title case to go to a trial in South Australia will be back before the Full Federal Court this month after the court had requested more submissions on key areas of significance.**

In December 2003, the Full Court of the Federal Court deferred its decision on



## Common ground key to moving ahead

by Fred Chaney

**Some supporters of Aboriginal Australia have expressed regret that little was said about Aboriginal affairs during the election campaign. That omission may have been for the good. It is hard to imagine that a divisive election campaign is the best time to consider the complex issues which surround Indigenous advancement and reconciliation.**

It would also be a mistake for supporters of reconciliation to use the re-election of John Howard as an excuse to keep whinging about what's not possible rather than doing something worthwhile and meaningful within the context of a government reaffirmed by the electorate.

The good news is there is a surprising amount of common ground about the way forward. Even that often critical analyst, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, in its most recent social justice report concludes there are a number of recent initiatives moving us in the right direction. The report drew attention to recent developments in implementing the Council of Australian Governments' commitments to reconciliation, particularly the release last year of the first report on overcoming indigenous disadvantage and COAG's ten whole-of-government community trials.

That might all sound like gobbledegook to people living outside Canberra. After all it's much easier to think of these issues in terms of law and order, stopping substance abuse and ending welfare dependency, all worthy but none of them offering complete or long-term answers. The truth is that successive governments, federal and state and of different political persuasions, have struggled to find answers.

So the fact that governments across Australia have found common ground now, and made common commitments, suggests there is a way forward.

This new, broadly accepted direction in indigenous affairs is based on two fundamentals: better coordination in the work of governments; and, most important, engaging and empowering Indigenous communities to run their own affairs and find their own solutions.

Proposed post-ATSIC arrangements include the establishment of a network of Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) in regional and remote locations around the country.

But it's the other side of the post-ATSIC equation that says the most about our new thinking in indigenous affairs.

The plan is that ICCs will negotiate, plan and implement essential programs in health, housing, education, family violence, etc. with networks of elected and representative Indigenous organisations. The ICCs will work in partnership with whatever representative structures local Indigenous people decide to put in place within their regions.

This is radical stuff, and where this attempt differs from past failures is that there are a whole lot of important 'drivers' of change, including commitment from the highest levels of the bureaucracy. And the approach is imbued with a recognition that Indigenous people themselves and their direct engagement in finding solutions is the vital ingredient of positive change.

We must be honest and open about the fact, and it is a fact, that current attempts will fail also if competent, legitimate Indigenous structures are not equipped to fulfil their end of the deal.

Leaders must allow sufficient time for effective indigenous governance structures to be developed regionally and nationally which will be central to the success of this most worthwhile initiative.

Until now, national representative structures have been imposed by governments. What is possible now is something quite different as models of representative leadership are being discussed across Australia by Indigenous people themselves, with support from Reconciliation Australia and the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre. This is a historic process and it needs time.

The government must be prepared to support consultative processes in the hope that truly representative voices will emerge — designed by the Indigenous people of Australia and able, therefore, to provide leadership to desperately needy regional communities and in the defining national debate about our shared future. ■

*The Hon. Fred Chaney AO is Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia and Deputy President of the National Native Title Tribunal.*

*This is an extract from Fred Chaney's opinion piece which appeared in the Australian Financial Review on 25 October 2004.*



Left to right: Janelle Carlo, Jim Hill, Brendan McNamara, Martina Jacobs at the handover ceremony.



## Central Land Council 30th birthday celebrations

The Central Land Council celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in October, marking the occasion with an event at Anzac Oval in Alice Springs. Thousands of people from Central Australian communities gathered for the celebrations. The land council was formed in 1974 to manage land rights issues and provide strong advocacy for Aboriginal people in areas of social and economic development. The statutory body represents Aboriginal people over an area of 780,000 square kilometres in the Central Australian region.

Alyarre men dance for the crowds gathered at Anzac Oval in Alice Springs to celebrate thirty years of the Central Land Council.



## Yirandali people benefit from native title agreement

**A year and a half after signing an indigenous land use agreement (ILUA), the Yirandali people of north-western Queensland and the Flinders Shire Council are still experiencing its benefits.**

In April 2003 the Yirandali people received two hectares of freehold land on the western outskirts of Hughenden as part of the ILUA that also allowed for the transfer into freehold of 35 hectares of land for the Hughenden Industrial Estate.

Flinders Shire Council chief executive officer, Stephen McCartney, said the ILUA had worked well: the shire had already developed stage one (eight blocks) of the Hughenden Industrial Estate and the Yirandali people had received an area of land that had the potential for development.

'The main purpose from the shire community point-of-view was to develop land for industrial purposes,' he said.

'At first there was a bit of uncertainty but over time we have developed a very good relationship. The traditional owners we are dealing with have been very open and honest and know where they stand. Good communication and a good relationship have developed and through this open, honest relationship we have achieved good results.'

Tribunal member, John Sosso, who mediated the agreement, said the hand

back of land to the Yirandali people demonstrated that the agreement was being implemented according to plan and was working on the ground.

'Increasingly local authorities are seeing the value of engaging with native title groups to negotiate outcomes that are mutually advantageous,' he said. 'More and more of these groups are choosing to develop ILUAs, seeing these types of agreements as a good way forward.'

'Not only can the council develop the industrial estate, but the native title claimants have also been formally recognised and are pursuing an ongoing constructive relationship with both local and state governments. Through the process, there was a transformation of attitudes and an increasing preparedness to engage.'

Central Queensland Land Council CEO, Russell Bellar, who is representing the Yirandali people in the negotiations, said the positive relationship that developed between the parties during the development of the first ILUA would benefit the second stage of negotiations.

'We're hoping that through these negotiations the Yirandali people will get some land that they can use as an economic base or as somewhere they can come back to,' he said. ■



Ms Linda Dorendorff, deputy chairperson of the Martu Prescribed Body Corporate.

## Personal experiences help claimants understand PBCs

**A determination of native title ends what has usually been a long journey for claimants.**

For the Martu and Ngurrara people of Western Australia, their determination in September 2002 ended a 25-year wait to gain recognition.

While the determination delivered rights and interests, it also brought them a responsibility under Australian law to manage the day-to-day business of the area. This is done by a Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) which is a native title corporation that may hold and/or manage native title for the whole group.

Since the determination, the Martu and Ngurrara have established the Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation (Jamukurnu-Yapalikunu): the legal body that conducts business with other people with an interest in the area.

But not all native title holders have been able to develop a working PBC like the Martu and Ngurrara, and the responsibility to develop and sustain PBCs has restricted the ability of native title holders to fully enjoy their rights.

Access to funding, issues of governance and law and general knowledge about the difficulties in setting up and maintaining a PBC have all been identified as problems which need to be overcome.

To provide information about what is required to maintain a PBC, and at the invitation of North Queensland Land Council, the Tribunal's Cairns office arranged for representatives of the Martu and Ngurrara people to share their experiences with regional traditional owners.

Ms Linda Dorendorff (Martu) and Ms Annette Kogolo (Ngurrara) explained how the group had overcome funding issues, worked to link the two groups together and

then successfully set up the registered native title body corporate.

Funds are obtained under a mining agreement and the Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation employs four common law holders as liaison officers.

The decision-making process and the constitution of the governing committee are in accordance with the traditional law and custom of the common law holders. These processes have been tested, both at the first annual general meeting and in a series of significant mining agreements made over the past 12 months.

Cairns regional manager, Steve Ducksbury, said the exchange had given the north Queensland claimants an opportunity to discuss a range of issues surrounding PBCs, but also the native title process. Few north Queensland claims would have access to funds via a mining agreement like the Martu, but the process to develop PBCs and their management after a determination were important.

'The claimants and representative bodies really appreciated the opportunity to talk to the Martu people about their personal experiences,' Mr Ducksbury said.

'As the Martu have travelled through the native title process successfully, the people in our region were very interested to learn from some of their lessons.'

## Long relationship leads to pastoral agreement

**Facing the uncertainties of one of Queensland's worst droughts, Australia's largest beef producer has settled the questions of access and traditional activities with a native title claimant group over a 10,032-square-kilometre pastoral property in north Queensland.**

The Australian Agricultural Company (AACo) and the Waluwarra/Georgina River people signed a memorandum of understanding on 11 October over AACo's north Queensland flagship property 'Headingly'.

The MoU establishes how business operations and traditional activities will be coordinated on the property. It acknowledges that the Waluwarra/Georgina River people, who have a native title claim over 21,353 square kilometres south-west of Mt Isa, including Headingly, are the traditional owners of the area. It also provides for protection of their significant sites on the property and their access to country to pass on culture to future generations.

On the banks of the Georgina River, where about 100 traditional owners had gathered for the signing of the agreement, AACo chief

executive and managing director, Don Mackay spoke about the Aboriginal stockmen who once worked on Headingly station and said AACo would not be where it is today without their hard work. He acknowledged the long established relationship and shared history between Indigenous people and AACo.

'AACo acknowledges the benefits that have come from this relationship and seeks to work meaningfully and respectfully with Indigenous people to build on this foundation,' he said.

Speaking on behalf of the Waluwarra/Georgina River nations of people Marlene Speechley, chairperson of the Waluwarra Aboriginal Corporation, said the agreement was a great step towards reconciliation.

'We look forward to working together to protect our precious land and resources. The Waluwarra/Georgina River people are 100 per cent committed to work with and to develop our new relationship,' she said.

Member Ruth Wade acknowledged the role of Steven Keating and Damon Innes of the



Left to right: Lizzie Dempsey, Mavis Sarmardin, Sally Maher, Emily Dempsey, Eileen Jard and Henry Burke signing the MoU.

Tribunal's pastoral project team for initiating meetings between the Waluwarra/Georgina River people and representatives of AACo in 2003.

Mrs Wade said the agreement demonstrated that even in times of drought, when getting on with business was tougher for the pastoral industry, practical agreements could be reached that assisted with the smooth operation of a property and recognised and protected the rights of Indigenous groups.

'Through their proactive approach and willingness to engage, these groups have reached an agreement they are both happy with and have led the way for other pastoralists and Indigenous groups in Queensland,' she said.

# Land Access strategy aims to streamline process

The group driving the Australian Government's Minerals Exploration Action Agenda (MEAA), has passed land access issues on to the Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources (MCMPR).

The council regularly gathers ministers and officials from all states to address issues regarding the future sustainability of our minerals and petroleum industries. The council's Sustainable and Indigenous Issues Subcommittee will be responsible for developing and implementing the Land Access Strategy.

The strategy aims to provide industry, communities and governments with more certainty and operational efficiency by engaging with all stakeholders with interests in native title, cultural and environmental heritage, and sustainable development.

The first action under the land access strategy seeks to identify and remove impediments to land access, and streamline processes between jurisdictions. Western Australia, which has already undertaken a number of initiatives, will be viewed as a pilot jurisdiction.

Other actions include the following:

1. Develop consistent, open and effective community engagement strategies to promote community acceptance of the mining industry and its contribution to a sustainable future.
2. Promote these strategies through the MCMPR and industry associations.
3. Facilitate, where possible, the development of regional agreements for native title and heritage protection approvals processes and to promote their use as templates to:
  - facilitate negotiations between mineral explorers and native title representative bodies

- reduce the backlog of tenement applications
- improve relationships between miners and indigenous interests, and
- provide ongoing access to land.

4. Increase awareness of the availability of the expedited procedure provisions of the *Native Title Act 1993* for low impact minerals exploration, by promulgating information about the application and use of the expedited procedure drawn from fact sheets published by the National Native Title Tribunal.
5. Reform the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA) to simplify and accelerate processes for granting exploration tenements consistent with the outcome of extensive reviews and consultations. ■

## Tagalaka people negotiate with local shire



Queensland Minister for Mines and Natural Resources Stephen Robertson with Tagalaka elders Gladys Callope, Agnus Marrapa and Jessie Doolan at the agreement signing.

**North Queensland's Tagalaka people and the Croydon Shire Council signed an indigenous land use agreement (ILUA) on 15 October, highlighting the benefits of negotiating native title.**

Queensland Minister for Mines and Natural Resources the Hon. Stephen Robertson MP said the outcome was an important step in resolving native title tenure issues in the Croydon Shire.

'The Tagalaka people and Croydon Shire have worked together in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation to achieve this good result,' he said at the signing event in Croydon.

The Tagalaka people lodged two native title claims in 1998 and 2001, which cover almost all of Croydon Shire. This agreement resolves tenure issues that arose through the first claim. The Tagalaka people and council are currently engaged in discussions regarding

the second native title claim

Under the agreement, native title will be surrendered over 13 blocks of unused state land, which will be made available to the Croydon Shire Council as freehold land. The agreement also gives the Tagalaka rights to access the Croydon Airport area to exercise their traditional laws and customs.

One of the ILUAs unique features is the inclusion of the Tagalaka people's consent for roads the council will construct in the future. In addition, the council obtains a long lease for the Belmore Dam catchment, which provides the town's water supply, in exchange for dedicated camping facilities by the dam for the Tagalaka people.

Minister Robertson said that the goodwill shown by all those involved in the negotiations was the key to achieving these outcomes. ■

# Plotting the way forward for agreement-making

***Honour Among Nations?* is a critical commentary on treaties and agreements reached between Indigenous people and others in Australia and internationally.**

Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors from Australia, New Zealand, North America and Canada give their accounts of treaty and agreement-making with topics as diverse as: maritime agreements, Torres Strait Islander self-government, the Timor Sea Treaty, and copyright and intellectual property issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors.

Through reference to the past, present and future, readers are invited to consider treaty and agreement-making in the context of changing political and legal landscapes.

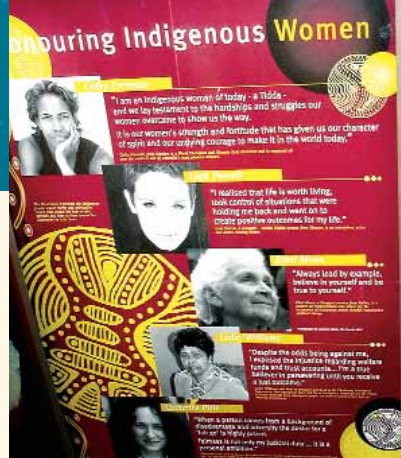
For example, postdoctoral fellow at the University of Melbourne Dr Julie Evans outlines how colonial occupiers used legal means to dispossess Aboriginal people in Western Australia in the nineteenth century; Tribunal President Graeme Neate discusses the impact of the *Mabo* decision in 1992, the Native Title Act of 1993 and the National Native Title Tribunal's agreement-making role; Parry Agius and others involved with the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement explain the negotiating environment in South Australia and their proposal for a state-wide agreement; and Rio Tinto's Bruce Harvey writes about cultural changes in the company which resulted in the Cape York agreement.

Launching the book in early October, Justice North of the Federal Court described the scope of work as 'breathtaking', stating that while 'the chapters devoted to the past and present give a bleak picture for treaty or agreement-making... there are significant contributions in the book which plot the way forward.

'The book shows the operation of law concerning indigenous rights both at its best and at its worst', but its messages will hopefully promote the cause of treaty or agreement-making as a path to the redress of past injustice and reconciliation,' he said.

*Honour Among Nations?* can be purchased online through Melbourne University Press or for more information, visit their website at [www.mup.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.mup.unimelb.edu.au)

Justice North of the Federal Court at the book launch.



## Reason to celebrate native title

**Seventeen-year old Gunggari woman, Lauren Brown (above), didn't know much about native title when she began writing her grandmother's story on negotiating one of Australia's first pastoral access agreements.**

But after finishing what became her award winning essay she now believes that there is reason to celebrate native title.

Lauren, a student at West Moreton Anglican College in Karrabin outside of Ipswich, recently won the Queensland division of the National History Challenge for her essay about a native title agreement that her grandmother, Ethel Munn — an elder of the Gunggari people — was instrumental in developing.

Addressing the theme 'Celebrations in Australian History', Lauren wrote about the negotiations between the Gunggari people and pastoralists, Camilla Cowley and family, over a native title claim.

When the Gunggari people lodged their native title claim in 1996 over the sheep and cattle property 'North Yanchow' in south-west Queensland, the property owners were frustrated and worried. But when Camilla Cowley and her family met with Ethel and Gordon Munn at a United Graziers' meeting, they were able to talk about what the claim meant.

'Everyone involved in [native title] has to communicate and through that process you get more of an understanding,' Lauren said.

Through perseverance, the Gunggari people and Cowley family were able to establish an agreement which gave the Gunggari access to an area of significance in recognition of their traditional ownership.

The agreement meant a lot to Mrs Munn and her people because of the recognition it gave them and the relationships they developed.

'People always talk about reconciliation, but native title is something that can actually be done — it's recognition,' she said.

'We have reason to celebrate the advances in native title and, most importantly, the people who have contributed to the progress of native title and land rights.'

Lauren has just completed her final year of high school and plans to do a bachelor of journalism next year.

## INSIDE INFORMATION

### The steps to ILUA registration

The Tribunal has published a new series of information sheets on the steps to the registration of indigenous land use agreements. For copies, please contact the Tribunal on freecall 1800 640 501 or order them from the website at: [www.nntt.gov.au/metacard/publications.html](http://www.nntt.gov.au/metacard/publications.html).

Tell us what you think of *Talking Native Title* by completing the readership survey (inserted in print copies or available online at [www.nntt.gov.au](http://www.nntt.gov.au)).