

VICTORIAN INDIGENOUS WORKING GROUP STATE WIDE CONFERENCE

University of Melbourne, 9- 10 December 1999

The Victorian Indigenous Working Group held the first state wide conference on native title and cultural heritage at the University of Melbourne. The purpose of the Conference was two-fold, to provide and share information and to develop strategies and future directions for the VIWG.

The morning plenary sessions saw speakers from key organisations, such as Mirimbiak Nations Aboriginal Corporation, the National Native Title Tribunal, the National Indigenous Working Group, Indigenous Land Corporation and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

Representatives from the Victorian Department of Justice outlined the new Victorian Labor government's policy on native title. They also presented the different implementation options that were being presented by the department with respect to assistance for applications, approaches to mediation and regional agreements and identified what was and was not likely to change under the new government. The Department invited input from the VIWG to the policy options, an invitation that is likely to be pursued early in the new year against the backdrop of the Conference.

The afternoon sessions provided an opportunity for delegates to discuss strategic approaches to negotiation with government in relation to native title, cultural and natural heritage and, importantly, the operation of representative structures for Indigenous peoples in Victoria. The issues addressed were broad ranging but were tied together to provide a focused strategic direction for the Working Group in the coming year. The notes from the workshops were compiled and will form the basis for a report, together with papers from the speakers, into a final report to be produced in the new year.

Congratulations to Monica Morgan and her team of organisers for a well run and important event. Thanks also to the Melbourne University Indigenous Unit for their hospitality. The staff of the Native Title Research Unit was pleased to be able to attend the Conference and lend our support by facilitating sessions, presenting papers and assisting with set up and other organisation on the day.

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