

The South Pacific Pipeline Company (SPPL) has advertised its intention to negotiate Indigenous Land Use Agreements in relation to the Papua New Guinea Gas project. The project involves the building, operating and maintenance of a gas pipeline from Kutubu in Papua New Guinea to Gladstone in Queensland. The proposed agreements relate to the Cape York and Central Queensland sections of the proposed pipeline. *(NTN (Qld) Jan 2000, p1)**

Santos Limited has advertised its intention to begin negotiations with Indigenous groups in relation to an Indigenous Land Use Agreement covering the area of petroleum operations in the south-west corner of Queensland near the South Australian and New South Wales borders. *(NTN (Qld), Jan 2000, p1)*

Oil Company of Australia (OCA) has advertised its intention to begin negotiations with Indigenous groups in relation to a gas pipeline from Myall Creek gas field to the Beranga South gas field in the Surat area of south-west Queensland. *(NTN (Qld), Jan 2000, p2)*

THE LAND AND RESOURCES TRIBUNAL (QUEENSLAND)

The Land and Resources Tribunal (LRT) is a new State tribunal. It was established to provide a single forum to deal with all issues in dispute regarding proposed resource development and other land management issues.

The Tribunal was established as the independent State body envisaged under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

Our jurisdiction is extensive. We will:

- take over the mining jurisdiction previously handled by the Wardens Court.
- if the Queensland alternative State provisions native title scheme is approved by the Commonwealth, be the independent State body to hear native title objections to certain future acts.
- have exclusive jurisdiction for injunctions to prevent interference with culturally significant items.
- have exclusive jurisdiction to enforce and interpret negotiated agreements about native title and mining.
- determine objections concerning State compulsory acquisitions for significant infrastructure facilities for third parties.

However the LRT will not determine native title claims. That remains a task for others.

Our members will include persons at judicial-equivalent level (the president and deputy presidents) and others (non-presiding members) with experience in cultural heritage and indigenous issues, mining, mediation, native title, land or other issues. This mix of experience and expertise should greatly benefit all tribunal users. Our Acting Registrar is an experienced lawyer and manager and our support staff are impressive and knowledgeable people who are committed to the principles of accessibility and co-operative development of the practices of our jurisdiction.

I am keen to emphasise that we will be a completely independent, fair and user-friendly tribunal. Our emphasis will be on client service. Accordingly, we will:

- sit in Brisbane, regional centres and other places as required.
- use a simplified form of rules and procedures.
- adopt an active case management approach including the routine use of directions hearings.
- minimise formality, and not be bound by the rules of evidence.
- deal with matters quickly.
- emphasise the importance of mediation.
- respect the interests of all stakeholders, including cultural sensitivity.
- hold regular information and feedback sessions with user groups.
- embrace state-of-the-art electronic technology.
- publish our decisions on the internet.

I have also scrapped some practices. For example, legal wigs and gowns will not be worn in the tribunal. That direction has already received widespread approval.

Most of these initiatives have occurred following extensive consultation with our many stakeholders. I congratulate all who participated. We intend to monitor and fine-tune our practices on an ongoing basis. That is a constructive and practical approach which will facilitate the successful operation of this new jurisdiction.

The LRT looks forward with enthusiasm to the work which lies ahead in this interesting, challenging and topical jurisdiction.

Gregory J Koppenol
President, Land and Resources Tribunal