

The 12th Annual Cultural Heritage and Native Title Conference is being held at the Duxton Hotel in Perth from the 19-21 April 2005. For more information including agenda and costings, please refer to the following link:
http://www.iir.com.au/conferences/confdetail.html?detail=I0276.html&cat_code=resources&conf_code=I0276

The National Indigenous Land and Sea Management Conference is being held at Ross River Homestead approximately 83km east of Alice Springs on the Ross Highway from the

FEATURE

Five Communities Join Native Title History

By the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

In a remarkable week, the Torres Strait Islands of Erub, Ugar, Iama, Badu and Boigu made the history books in December 2004 after receiving their native title from the Federal Court of Australia, marking a major milestone for the region.

The Federal Court of Australia travelled to each of the five Islands to conduct a special sitting of the Court, which was attended by traditional owners for the purpose of formally recognising their native title rights.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the entire Torres Strait celebrated this moment in history, which signified the recognition of native title over the last of Torres Strait's community Islands in which claims were lodged under the *Native Title Act (Cth) 1993*.

"Our people's struggle for native title land recognition started with Mer Island and the Mabo case in 1992 and I was privileged to see this legacy continue and witness the last of 14 island communities being granted their native title rights over their islands," Mr Kris said.

"Native title is about being recognised as owners of this land and for our spiritual and cultural connections with our land and sea. It's our heritage and gives meaning to our lives and that's why it's so important."

19-21 April 2005. Information about this conference is available at:
<http://www.clc.org.au/OurLand/conference.asp>

Websites

The Northern Territory Government has created a website on the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act*. The website can be viewed at: <http://www.dcm.nt.gov.au/dcm/parks/index.shtml>

"We have fought long and hard to secure this recognition and I would like to commend the traditional owners of all five recent claims for their ongoing commitment and resilience – it has not been an easy path for anyone involved but the decision by the Federal Court of Australia has made it all worth it."

"The TSRA's Native Title Office, under direction from the Islands' traditional owners, had been in protracted negotiation with the State of Queensland for the previous 4 years to achieve this recognition."

"The consent determinations were being blocked by the State's position that native title had been extinguished over all land on which works to benefit the native title holders had been built, for instance local community housing and community infrastructure."

"Clearly, this was a major hurdle for the communities and we are all extremely relieved that the State agreed to recognise exclusive native title over the areas claimed by each of the five Torres Strait Island communities."

"The TSRA's Native Title Office has had a challenging task of advancing these claims and should be commended."

"It has been like a long journey and we have made it home with our integrity, cultural pride and determination strengthened," Mr Kris said.