

MEDIA RELEASE



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ANTaR Victoria calls for no-nonsense land hand-back

ANTaR Chairperson Dr Peter Lewis today called for a breakthrough in Aboriginal Land Rights in Victoria.

“Aboriginal people embroiled in lengthy, fruitless claims desperately deserve an act of good faith by the Victorian government,” Dr Lewis said.

“As well as appropriately resourcing the implementation of the Victorian Native Title Framework and ensuring Traditional Owners have an equal place at the table with government, we call on the Victorian Government to commit to a return of land parcels to each clan in the State,” he said.

“The key principles of the new Victorian Native Title Framework are most welcome but results are still dependent on negotiation process outcomes,” Dr Lewis said. “An up-front land hand-back commitment would help to strengthen Traditional Owners position when it comes to negotiation with the State.”

“The Victorian Government last week forced the closure of Reconciliation Victoria, and the ALP has returned almost zero freehold land to Aboriginal Victorians in three terms of office. A framework is one thing; outcomes are another.”

“Fifteen years down the track, with reportedly over \$100 million spent in Victoria, only three Native Title claims have been resolved with no substantial return of land. This money would have been better spent buying freehold land and returning it to Traditional Owners along with annual funding for the operation of Traditional Owner Groups.”

“We must never forget; it is their land.”

“Both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people in Victoria want better efficiency and value for money in the state’s land-claims and cultural heritage regimes. We want to see the hard work of Traditional Owner Groups to get the government to this point rewarded.”

Victorian Attorney-General Rob Hulls announced the draft New Native Title Framework at the National Native Title Conference at the MCG on Thursday 4th June.

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