ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS ACT REVIEW

Among 47 recommendations contained in a historic review of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (ALRA) tabled in Parliament today are proposals on housing, land claims, regulatory powers and incentive models, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello said.

The statutory review of the ALRA, which is required every five years, began in December 2011 with the establishment of a Working Group, chaired by the Registrar of the ALRA. It includes a representative of Crown Lands, Aboriginal Affairs and two community members from the Land Council network.

The tabling of the report will be followed by a wide ranging consultation process with the Aboriginal Land Council network and other key stakeholders in early 2013.

"It is timely as we come to celebrate 30 years of the ALRA, that the review of land rights legislation provides an opportunity to significantly reform the Act to strengthen the land council network in NSW," Mr Dominello said.

"While the recommendations will be subject to public consultation, the recommendations could lead to a more sustainable land council network that drives greater economic outcomes for Aboriginal people across NSW."

For the first time, the NSW Government brought together, on the Working Group, the representative of Crown Lands with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and community members.

"This historic dialogue has already led to improvements in the system. Changes that address a range of administrative inefficiencies have already started to simplify the land claims system," Mr Dominello said.

The Working Group also made recommendations to improve the conditions and maintenance of residential housing held by land councils.

There were also recommendations to incorporate incentives into the ALRA to drive greater capacity and growth of land councils.

NSW Aboriginal Land Council CEO Geoff Scott said the report was “a significant body of work designed to facilitate and enable the land council network to meet the current and emerging needs of Aboriginal people.”

Working Group member, Sean Gordon, CEO of the Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council, said: “I feel confident that the recommendations will enable Local Aboriginal Land Councils to unlock their lands to create an economic base that will ensure that real benefits are provided to their communities.”

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