MINISTER HELPS CELEBRATE 30 YEARS OF LAND RIGHTS

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello helped celebrate the 30th anniversary of the landmark *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* at the bi-annual Statewide Conference for Aboriginal Land Councils in the Hunter Valley today.

Part of the four-day conference, hosted by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, was devoted to remembering the historic passing of the land rights legislation in 1983.

In a speech to the more than 300 delegates, Mr Dominello said the Act was a milestone of great historical significance.

“In 1983 the NSW Land Rights Act was streets ahead of other Aboriginal legislation across Australia – and it remains so today.”

Mr Dominello said wide-ranging public consultations with the land council network and other stakeholders will begin in August on a thorough review of the Act. The review is based on the 47 recommendations made late last year by a Working Party chaired by the Registrar of the Act.

The Working Party, which included a representative of Crown Lands, Aboriginal Affairs and community members from the land council network, made recommendations on issues including housing, land claims and regulatory powers.

Mr Dominello said he looked forward to working in partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council to create a “strong, vibrant and representative land council network that leads the Aboriginal community in NSW into a better future”.

“The Land Rights Act holds tremendous potential to empower Aboriginal communities to create social and economic ventures together.

“The 30th anniversary of the Act is therefore not just a chance to reflect upon the last 30 years, but also a time to reflect on how the Act can best serve the next 30 years,” Mr Dominello said.

In consultation with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, the NSW Government has already introduced the *Aboriginal Land Rights Miscellaneous Amendment Bill 2013* to amend the Act to assist land councils become more efficient and reach their full economic potential.

“The reforms I have outlined, together with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council’s vision for capacity building and economic development, will help the Act more fully realise the aspirations of the past,” Mr Dominello said.

Media: Jim O’Rourke 0409 185 431