

Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group

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Victorian Traditional Owners welcome UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group this week celebrated the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly.

“This is an historic document”, said Len Clarke, co-chair of the Land Justice Group. “It sets a new international standard, and with more voter support than was received by the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights nearly 60 years ago”.

143 countries voted in favour of the document, which has been 20 years in the making.

Robert Nicholls, also a co-chair of the Land Justice Group, expressed regret that Australia voted against the Declaration, along with Canada, New Zealand and the USA.

“Among these four countries”, noted Mr Nicholls, “only Australia has never entered into treaties with their first nations. That makes Australia uniquely backward.”

Graham Atkinson, chair of Native Title Services Victoria, noted that the Declaration is an aspirational document and not binding in Australian law. Mr Atkinson stressed, however, that Victoria does have a *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*.

“This UN Declaration provides a new international benchmark for interpreting the State’s legislation”, he said.

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