



**Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (Vic) Inc.**  
*Incorporating Defenders of Native Title*

Brotherhood of St Laurence building, 67 Brunswick St, Fitzroy VIC 3065

Tel. (03) 9419 3613  
Fax (03) 9417 2691

antarvic@nativetitle.org  
<http://www.nativetitle.org>

**MEDIA RELEASE:** *For immediate release – Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2003*

**ANTaR slams Victorian Government for ‘sham’ anti-racism dinner**

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (Victoria) will be joining members of the Yorta Yorta Nation in a vigil outside the Cultural Diversity Week Gala Dinner hosted by the Bracks Government in Melbourne this Friday.

Convenor of ANTaR's Yorta Yorta Support Group, Dr Chris Atmore, said that the dinner, intended to reflect Australia's commitments to combat racism, was a sham as far as racism against the Yorta Yorta and other Victorian Indigenous peoples were concerned.

'Since opposing the Yorta Yorta native title claim in Court, the Bracks Government has failed to show any practical commitment to enabling the Yorta Yorta Nation to achieve genuine land justice, economic and cultural self-determination.' Dr Atmore said that the Government had withdrawn funds and had not provided adequate structural and financial support for Indigenous communities dealing with the bureaucratic tangle of land negotiations and cultural heritage processes.

'We expect real action and not rhetoric from a Labor Government with majorities in both houses. As a basic human rights issue, the Government must recognise Yorta Yorta country, starting by immediately returning all the Crown land and properly resourcing the Yorta Yorta Nation to facilitate efficient negotiations as equal partners.'

Friday 21 March is the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racism, on which in 1960 African protesters against apartheid were killed and wounded. The UN declared the day to remember the lives lost defending basic human rights and to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Dr Atmore said that Victorian Indigenous peoples had been included in the dinner simply as another ethnic community. 'But the human rights of Indigenous peoples are distinct, and are central and fundamental to genuinely addressing all forms of racism.'

She said that Aboriginal existence in Victoria had as its backbone a network of diverse nations of traditional owners, each with responsibility for a different area of country. 'As acknowledged by UN documents such as the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, racism is crucially related to stolen land and cultural genocide, and these must be addressed before any real progress against racism can be made. This is the Victorian Labor Government's own heritage of human rights tragedies.'

**For comment:**

Dr Chris Atmore 03 9527 2653, or if no reply, Peter Lewis 0417 529 142