



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

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Mabo Day Bridge Attempts to Bridge State Government Reality Gap

A Mabo Day Bridge will be constructed on the steps of Victorian State Parliament on *Tuesday 3rd June*, at 12 noon to mark the opposition by the Yorta Yorta, and their supporters, to the proposal to build the Western (W1) route bridge over the Murray River which is on Yorta Yorta traditional country at Echuca-Moama.

“While our little bridge of cardboard boxes may look comical, the reality is that this State Government’s approach to reconciliation and land justice is a joke,” ANTaR Victoria Chairperson Peter Lewis said today.

“On this, the eleventh anniversary of the Mabo Decision, the distance between Government reconciliation rhetoric and the reality of land injustice needs to be bridged,” Mr Lewis said. “The W1 route bridge has the potential of disturbing the only evidence of Yorta Yorta occupation near Echuca as well as wrecking an area of significant spiritual and cultural value.”

“Is this another step in the Government’s campaign of opposition against the Yorta Yorta’s native title claim? Is the Government trying to get rid of the evidence before the Yorta Yorta find an international arena to pursue their land claim? Why does traffic flow in Echuca mean more to the Government than the cultural heritage of the Yorta Yorta. Is this their idea of reconciliation!”

An alternative bridge route more acceptable to the Yorta Yorta was rejected by the Government, despite the fact that an Environmental Impact Statement said that the chosen route was the most detrimental to the environment as well as the Yorta Yorta’s cultural heritage.

“The Yorta Yorta Nations and others supporting their ongoing battle for their lands and waters are upset and angry at the lack of respect and consideration shown by the Government for Yorta Yorta cultural and spiritual values, and for their status as the first peoples of the area,” Yorta Yorta spokesperson Mr Henry Atkinson said.

“The involvement of Dr Brunton, who also gave so-called ‘evidence’ against us in the native title case, in the Bridge process further demonstrates the lack of respect the Yorta Yorta have been given. The Yorta Yorta are not objects, they are the true custodians of the Barmah-Millewa forest.” He said.

For further information, contact:

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