

NTRU Project Report

Dr Lisa Strelein and Dr Jessica Weir have co-authored a chapter entitled 'Conservation and Human Rights in the context of Native Title in Australia', which was recently published in *Exploring Issues and Opportunities in Rights Based Approaches to Conservation*, CIFOR, IUCN and CEESP, Bogor, Indonesia, 2009.

In this chapter, Strelein and Weir examine the complexities of native title, highlighting the complementary and the competing nature of the relationship between human rights and conservation.

Conservation is not value-neutral; rather, it is shaped by historical, political, cultural and socio-economic issues, and is subject to exercises in power between different interest groups. Human rights frameworks bring a critical perspective to conservation projects, but they also bring their own assumptions and restrictions to conservation. Human rights principles often lead to a greater focus on humans and paying insufficient attention to ecological life and ecological relationships.

Indigenous peoples' economic relationships have been penalised by both responses to conservation and responses to human rights, such as native title. Native title law has reinforced the tendency to view Indigenous peoples' relationships with 'country' as 'primarily a spiritual affair'. The courts have refused to recognise general economic rights that emerge out of exclusive possession or the utilisation of resources.

Finding ways of supporting ecological relationships which also do not deny Indigenous peoples' livelihoods is paramount. What is needed is an understanding of the Indigenous philosophy of 'country', where the focus is on building healthy relationships that support both ecology and economy. The authors argue that 'shared commitments to sustain ecological life and respond to ecological devastation coupled with native title can provide a framework of tenures and rights that allow Indigenous and non-indigenous people to jointly support ecological relationships.'

Visit www.cifor.cgiar.org to download *Exploring Issues and Opportunities in Rights Based Approaches to Conservation*.

New NTRU Website

The Native Title Research Unit is currently working on a new version of the NTRU Website. The website is expected to be fully functioning by the **end of March 2010**. The new address will be:

<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/ntru/overview.html>



Example of new website page

If you are having trouble accessing our new website please let us know via email at ntru@aiatsis.gov.au

NTRU Staff Changes

There has been a lot of change in the Native title Research Unit in the early part of 2010.

The NTRU welcomes back Research Fellow, Dr. Jessica Weir from maternity leave.

The NTRU also welcomes new staff:

- Christine Regan, Project Officer in Native Title Funding
- Zoe Scanlon, Research Assistant / Publications Officer
- Matt O'Rourke, Research Assistant / Publications Officer
- Makeeta Ratulevu, Communications Officer
- Claire Stacey, Research Assistant
- Gabrielle Lauder, Research Assistant; and
- Marita Swain, Research Assistant