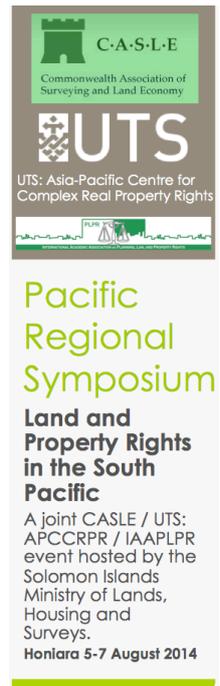


CASLE/UTS: APCCRPR/IAAPLPR Pacific
Regional Symposium on Land and Property
Rights in the South Pacific,
Honiara, 5-7 August 2014.

Welcome address:

Hon. Manasseh Maelanga MP,
Minister of Home Affairs & Deputy Prime
Minister, Government of the Solomon
Islands



Good Morning. Overseas and local participants at this important regional symposium on Land and Property Rights in the South Pacific, Professor Boydell and his colleagues from the UTS: Asia-Pacific Centre for Complex Real Property Rights, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen – on behalf of the Ministry for Lands, Housing and Surveys I extend to all of you a very warm welcome. To participants and resource people who have come from beyond the Solomon Islands, I extend to you a particularly warm welcome to our country.

Like our Melanesian neighbours, the Solomon Islands is rich in culture and as we are discovering also very rich in mineral deposits. We are literally sitting on a goldmine (as well as vast undersea reserves of nickel, surface bauxite and subterranean diamonds). Alluvial gold was first discovered by the Spanish

explorer, Alvaro de Mendana, who came here in 1568, and subsequently named the archipelago the Solomon Islands after the proverbial wealth of the biblical King Solomon.

The Solomon Islands have been inhabited by Melanesians for at least 50,000 years. As Melanesians we place a very high cultural value on land, and for many it is the basis of a subsistence lifestyle. Indeed, the land must be honoured, respected and cared for responsibly to ensure that our children and our children's children and future generations can enjoy and be sustained by the land as we have. Western societies have only spoken of 'sustainable development' for the last 25 years also, whereas Melanesians know that we 'blong' to the land and have been good stewards for many generations.

Since our Independence in 1978, we have had to navigate the sometimes-stormy waters between Melanesian culture and values and those of Western materialism with its aspirations of ever increasing economic growth. Understanding this 'pluralism' will be a central feature of this symposium. Over the next three days the symposium participants will discuss property rights, climate change, land resource compensation, property trusts, leases and emerging property rights in carbon. These are all complex issues, and for a government they cut across several ministries. As a country that is literally 'sitting on a goldmine' we should not need to be reliant on overseas aid. Instead, we need to find better ways to make our land work for us whilst we ensure it is not damaged or lost for future generations.

We have not come to listen to a collection of conference papers. Instead the roundtable workshop format means that all of you will be working hard in the coming days as Professor Boydell and his colleagues facilitate the sessions. It is a wonderful opportunity for continuing professional development, which is the goal of the Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy who initiated the event in association with the UTS: Asia-Pacific Centre for Complex Real Property Rights and the Planning, Law and Property Rights group, with modest funding support from the Commonwealth Foundation. I am delighted that my Ministry has been able to host this important symposium, which I am pleased to declare open.

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