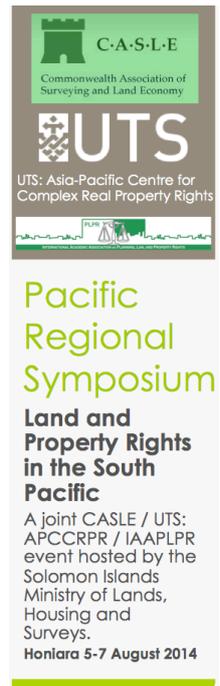


CASLE/UTS: APCCRPR/IAAPLPR Pacific
Regional Symposium on Land and Property
Rights in the South Pacific,
Honiara, 5-7 August 2014.

Closing address:

Mr. Stanley Waleanisia, PS Lands
Government of the Solomon Islands



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 my Government and the Ministry for Lands, Housing and Surveys I thank you for your participation in this timely Symposium. As we all know land is central to our culture and our future.

The style of the Symposium has allowed you all to engage in thought provoking discussions on climate change, land resource compensation, property trusts and lease structures, and emerging property rights in carbon. You have been the first to test and apply Mike McDermott's innovative HBA approach to thinking deeply about (and better understanding) these complex issues.

You have also heard and had the opportunity to discuss case studies on the Tina Hydro Scheme and the lived experience of the Vanuatu Land Program in the region.

Let me make this clear to you all that our Government does not want your discussions to just be mere talk. We need to see a clear pathway and plan coming out of this Symposium. That plan has the potential to evidence a paradigm shift in our thinking so that even though we are a small country we can work together to collectively make our resources work for us, so that benefits are more equitably shared.

I want to leave you with some thoughts that have come out of this Symposium, that we must action.

If laws don't work optimally for dealing with land (both State and Customary), then we need to change them and make them fit for our purpose. That way we can successfully empower the Ministry of Lands, other government ministries and Tribal groups to deal with land.

Participants, there is one thing that is clear that our Tribal / custom landowners need professional representation. This could be through a national body – a contemporary version of Fiji's Land Trust Board – or Provincial level specialists in negotiation, law, valuation and land management. We need to decide what we want.

On that point, we need to take the lead from our niVanuatu wantok

– we can't wait for others to do it for us, and nor should we. We need to decide what structures and support we need, and we need to fund it ourselves because it is very important to us.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have an election coming soon. Discussions on land need to be out in the open. I lay down the challenge to every aspirant political party to explain what they will do with our land and resources, and how they will support our customary landowners to get the most equitable intergenerational and sustainable return from our land, which is our second most valuable resource after our people.

We don't stop here. My Ministry is going to prepare a paper for Cabinet on the outcomes of this Symposium. This way the collective wisdom of this symposium will benefit the decision makers and the people. This briefing paper should focus on Trusts, Leases and Land Resource/Mining Compensation as these are the areas that the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey, and other relevant government Ministries need to build capacity.

Participants, I thank you all for your open and full participation in the last three days. I extend my thanks to the Minister of Lands and the Ministry's Executive for the foresight in hosting this event and for working closely with the facilitators and his team to make it such a great success.

We have benefitted from the Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy and the International Academic Association for Planning Law and Property Rights bringing this

Symposium to these shores. You will all agree that by holding the Symposium 'in-country' is far more of you have benefitted than if it had been held overseas. My final thanks, most importantly, goes to the team of four facilitators from the UTS: Asia-Pacific Centre for Complex Real Property Rights. Please join me in saying a very big 'Tagio Tumas' to Professor Spike Boydell, Professor John Sheehan, Mr Mike McDermott and Mr Ulai Baya. They are excellent facilitators and real professionals.

Whilst I officially declare this Pacific Regional Symposium on Land and Property Rights in the South Pacific closed, I urge you all to continue working together to turn these important ideas into a sustainable reality for the Solomon Islands and spread the message far and wide. Together we can save the Solomon.

Thank you.

[ENDS]