



MR1309

3 April 2009

Law Council Welcomes Australia's Support for Indigenous Rights

The Law Council says the Federal Government has taken an historic step forward in its formal recognition of the human rights of Indigenous Australians by officially lending its support to an important United Nations Declaration.

In welcoming today's formal statement by the Government endorsing a UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Law Council President John Corcoran said, "Australia has now joined the international community in officially recognising and respecting Indigenous rights".

"The Law Council has been calling for recognition of the Declaration for some time and we congratulate the Government on its announcement."

Mr Corcoran said the Declaration, which is not legally binding, reaffirmed that Indigenous Australians, and Indigenous people everywhere, are entitled to the fundamental human rights recognised in international law without discrimination.

"It also recognises the collective and cultural rights of Indigenous people, and their right to participate fully in the political, economic and social life of the State," Mr Corcoran said.

Australia was actively involved in the movement towards the recognition of Indigenous rights in the 1990s, including drafting of the Declaration. However, under the previous Government, Australia was one of only four countries to vote against the declaration when it was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2007.

"The Law Council hopes that the announcement will be supported by legislative and policy changes necessary to ensure the rights of Indigenous Australians are fully protected and promoted," Mr Corcoran concluded.

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