

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

2002 – 2003 has been a busy and rewarding year at the ILC. Once again, I have been delighted with the energy and commitment of my fellow Board members and the ILC staff. I especially want to thank all those applicants who have received ILC support during the year for working with the ILC to assist us in meeting both your needs and the ILC's statutory commitments.

As I reported last year, the ILC commissioned an internal audit of all ILC purchased properties. As a result of that report, the ILC has taken a number of steps. The two most significant of those are the release of a new National Indigenous Land Strategy and the development of a Property Remediation Program.

In December 2002 the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Philip Ruddock MP, launched the *Land Acquisition and Land Management Programs Guide 2002 – 2006*. That document represents the culmination of a thorough review of the ILC's performance and the development of a considered strategy for ILC activity in the future. In essence, the ILC will only acquire land, or provide support for land management, where applicants can demonstrate they have the capacity and commitment to make their project work. The benefits to be derived from ILC activity must fall into one of the following categories: cultural, social, environmental or economic.

The Property Remediation Program identified 108 properties the ILC has acquired (both divested and land still owned by the ILC) that required some form of remedial work to ensure genuine benefits are being derived from Indigenous ownership of that land. Tasks to be done ranged in priority from critical through to high, medium and low priority projects. The small number of properties with critical issues included such things as faulty septic tank systems that required repair. The critical issues have largely been corrected at the time of writing this report. I expect it will be a three to five year project to complete all remediation tasks, which include longer-term projects such as instituting ongoing training programs.

The ILC continues to progress its core functions of buying and managing Indigenous-held land. Since the establishment of the ILC through to 30 June 2003, it has purchased 162 properties covering 5.1 million hectares, of which 110 have been divested to Indigenous corporations.

Finally, I take this opportunity to assure existing and future applicants for ILC support that my Board and the ILC staff understand the special place land holds in the hearts and minds of Indigenous Australians. For those who have received either land acquisition and/or land management support, I trust your land is helping your group derive ongoing benefits. For those who have or will apply for ILC support, please make a genuine effort to comply with the ILC's application procedures. The ILC looks forward to working with you to meet your land acquisition and land management needs.

Shirley McPherson
Chairperson

