



Seminar on Land Rights in Melanesia

12-1.30pm Monday 15th March

Law School Common Room

Forgan Smith Building

Throughout Melanesia, customary land tenure is under pressure from international financial institutions and aid organisations that want to instigate land reforms as a means to accelerate economic growth in the region. However, local indigenous peoples have significant concerns about the transformation of ownership practices through registration and privatisation. Customary ownership remains central to the lives, identities and economic activity of Melanesian peoples and reforms threaten to alienate the land from traditional owners. The seminar will discuss the proposed reforms to land tenure in Melanesia, the possible impact on local people and alternative strategies to facilitate economic development.

Speakers

Associate Professor Jennifer Corrin, Executive Director – Asia Pacific Law in the Centre for Public International and Comparative Law

Gary Lee, Co-Director AID/WATCH

Joel Simo, Land Desk, Vanuatu Cultural Centre

Joel Simo is the Director of the Land Desk at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre in Port Vila, Vanuatu. Joel has published numerous works on Land in Vanuatu, including a Report of the National Review of the Customary Land Tribunal Program in Vanuatu and a co-authored report on Matrilineal Land Tenure in Vanuatu for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Joel has extensive experience leading grassroots community education and organising at a national level, and has played a key role in facilitating regional networks and collaborations on land.

Steven Sukot, Campaigns Manager, Bismarck Ramu Group, Papua New Guinea

Steven Sukot is the Campaigns Manager for the Bismarck Ramu Group, a local community development and conservation NGO based in Madang, Papua New Guinea. Protecting Melanesian customary land is a major focus of BRG's campaigns at present. Steven has been instrumental in facilitating the formation of the Melanesian Indigenous Land Defence Alliance (MILDA). He has also acted as a spokesperson for Papua New Guinean NGOs on land issues at both a national and international level.

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