MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local councils counselled on meeting native title and cultural heritage obligations

In light of a landmark ruling from the High Court this week, delegates from the peak body representing those working in the public works sector are touring Queensland talking to local councils about how they can meet their obligations regarding native title and cultural heritage.

Leigh Cunningham, Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia, Queensland (IPWEAQ) said they are undertaking a regional road show encompassing Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns.

“We will be discussing council obligations regarding native title and cultural heritage, and demonstrating new web-based tools which will provide councils with a step-by-step process for determining what action should be taken prior to deciding on future infrastructure and public works projects.

“Our objective is to reduce the likelihood that any council or company working on infrastructure and environmental projects will inadvertently extinguish native title or impact on cultural heritage, reducing the risk of potential litigation and liability,” she said.

Ms Cunningham said the assessment process is extremely complex and had previously demanded a high level of involvement from law professionals to source information and compile documentation.

“The new iMPACT web tools – which can be used by any trained operator – will dramatically improve efficiency and reduce the risk around native title and cultural heritage compliance when undertaking infrastructure and environmental projects.
“Local councils and others managing public works had been operating without a simple way to confidently ensure they are meeting their native title and cultural heritage compliance obligations for too long.

“I’d encourage anyone with questions about the iMPACT web tools to get in touch with our Information Manager, Mark Lamont,” said Ms Cunningham.

The Timber Creek native title case is a combination of 53 acts by the Northern Territory government including construction of public works and the granting of tenure, which were found to have ‘impaired or extinguished’ native title rights and interests in a 2016 Federal Court ruling.

This week, the High Court ordered the Northern Territory government to pay $2.53 million in compensation to the group of native title holders.

This ruling sets a new precedent which could potentially result in claims worth millions of dollars being made against local and state governments.

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About IPWEAQ

IPWEAQ is the peak body representing those working in the public works sector in Queensland.

Our purpose is to enhance the quality of life for all Queensland communities by advancing the skills, knowledge, resources available to those involved in the planning and provision of public works and services.

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