

Preface

On 3 June 1992, the High Court of Australia announced its decision in *Mabo v the State of Queensland*, upholding the claim of Eddie Mabo and four other Murray Island inhabitants who sought a declaration of their traditional land rights. By ruling six to one that the Australian continent was not *terra nullius* in 1788, the High Court paved the way for what may be one of the most crucial developments in the history of the relationship between Australian law and the original inhabitants of the continent.

With this conviction of the historic importance of *Mabo*, and in the hope of contributing to a discussion about its implications, we offer this Symposium. This first single-topic issue of the *Sydney Law Review* brings together a number of commentaries and reflections on the meaning, significance and implications of *Mabo* as viewed from different perspectives.

Our aim was to provide the broadest possible forum for lawyers, scholars and activists. We sought a wide range of opinions and expertise. If we were less than fully successful in producing a volume that covers the spectrum of opposing views on *Mabo* it was not for want of trying. A number of commentators who made themselves known to the general public as vocal critics of *Mabo* declined, on various grounds, our invitation to contribute.

While we tried to ensure not only a range of *viewpoints* but also a range of *topics*, we left our authors a broad discretion as to the actual subject matter of their contributions. We encouraged them to focus on the *assessment* and *implications* of *Mabo* rather than on an exegesis of the text of the decision. To put the collection of invited commentaries in the context of the High Court decision itself, we have included a Note outlining the principal issues in *Mabo* and summarising the judgments. The symposium is followed by a selection of reviews on recent books dealing with issues related to indigenous rights.

In publishing this special issue, the *Sydney Law Review* pays tribute to the late Eddie Mabo — a man who inspired and relentlessly pursued the High Court action which resulted in this historic decision.

The Editorial Board

