

Yaama Gomeroi.

The Gomeroi Native Title Applicants have been twice legally elected by the Gomeroi mob to take care of Gomeroi country and look after the Gomeroi native title claim and everything associated with the claim.

There are 19 elected Applicants – from Mungindi to Coonabarabran, Walgett to Tingha, Boobera to Bingara – representing all of Gomeroi country in NSW.

The Applicants watch over the legal business and, when the Court-hearing of the claim is finished, bring the native title Judgment and Determination of the Federal Court back to the Gomeroi claim group. That's the normal process under the native title laws.

The Applicants take our jobs seriously. We dare to dream that over the next 10-20 years things are going to be better for the next generations of Gomeroi people.

But, yeah, Native Title law is difficult. We are doing legal business with different governments and the various government departments within these different governments. It's a tricky business.

If your mob don't want to be waiting 30 years to run the Gomeroi native title claim, you need effective advocates with a professional understanding of the native title laws. You need the right lawyers.

The Gomeroi native title claim has had more than a few problems with the old lawyers, NTSCorp, after The Federal Court of Australia registered the Gomeroi NSW claim in December 2011.

NTSCorp is a government funded native title statutory organisation which is required by the Native Title Act to represent and act in the best interests of the native title claimants but to date this has not occurred in the Gomeroi claim.

After 4 years of being mucked about, the Applicants realised NTSCorp liked organising meetings and talking legal jargon but nothing much was happening.

The Gomeroi Applicants asked NTSCorp to take legal action to stop the NSW government from stealing Gomeroi land within the claim area. NTSCorp did nothing. Time went by.

The Gomeroi Applicants asked NTSCorp why they had not lodged the claim for Gomeroi country in Queensland? NTSCorp ignored the Applicants and just held more meetings. More time went by.

The Gomeroi Applicants asked NTSCorp to give them copies of the native title claim files that had been lodged with the Federal Court on behalf of the Gomeroi people. They asked NTSCorp to let them have the case files that legally belong to the Applicants as the legal representatives of all the Gomeroi claimants. When NTSCorp refused, the Gomeroi Applicants started becoming suspicious. Yet more time went by without NTSCorp taking any further action.

And yeah, we sacked NTSCorp just a couple of months later, when we discovered that these government-funded NTSCorp lawyers had gone behind the Gomeri Applicants backs and held some kind of secret meeting with a mining company operating on Gomeri country.

As a result of these problems and other, early in 2015 the Applicants appointed different, independent lawyers and voted 16 to 2 in favour of sacking the lazy, rude and ineffective NTSCorp lawyers.

What a difference our new legal team of Sam Hegney and Phil Teitzel have made. **In just over a year, they have forced the NSW Government to admit they are liable to pay at least \$1 million a year in compensation to the Gomeri people as “rent” for transfers of vacant crown land.**

They have won many court cases. Why? Because NTSCorp have not stopped trying to make legal trouble in the past year. Our new lawyers have defeated NTSCorp both in the Federal Court and before the full bench of the Federal Court.

They have set up a **Sovereign Wealth Fund** to make money by making investments. Down the track, the profits from the Gomeri Sovereign Wealth Fund will pay for important new services for Gomeri people like a mobile dental clinic and culturally appropriate aged care and children’s healthcare.

75 New Jobs in 6 months. The Gomeri Applicants and their new team have helped to create more than 75 new full time jobs for Gomeri people in the first 6 months that our caring for country business has been running. When we negotiate with any mining companies setting up on country, we make sure legally the company hires plenty of Gomeri workers. During the next 12 months, there will be another 200 jobs created.

The new lawyers are already working on the native title case and on 20 June 2016 they told Justice Jagot of the Federal Court that within 2 weeks of receiving the Gomeri claim files from NTSCorp, they will be able to advance the Gomeri native title claim.

This contrasts with NTSCorp’s lack of progress. Since September 2014, NTSCorp has taken no positive steps to advance the Gomeri claim and the Gomeri nation have lost senior Elders who could have provided traditional evidence to assist with advancing the Gomeri claim through the Federal Court.

Justice Barker, a Judge on the full bench of the Federal Court, noted in his May 2016 Gomeri judgment that the Native Title Act allows for the Applicants to replace legal advisers from time to time.

Judge Barker confirmed that the action taken by the Gomeri Native Title Applicants to remove NTSCorp as their lawyers was authorised and valid.

Federal Court Judge Jago directed that NTSCorp return the Gomeri claim files to the Applicants by April 30 2015 if no meeting was to be held under her orders. Despite the fact that the full bench of the Federal Court ordered that there would be no meeting under Judge Jagot's court orders, NTSCorp still refuses to handover the Gomeri case files which the Applicant group needs so they can get the Queensland part of the Gomeri native title claim lodged.

Some wonder if NTSCorp has got something to hide?

Is NTSCorp full of Sydney control freaks disrespecting Gomeri people and country? Is NTSCorp hiding dirty linen? Is it about the Government money that funds NTSCorp? Who knows? Could be all three of the above; or none of em.

The longer NTSCorp are creating expensive legal hassles, interfering with and disrespecting the informed choices made by Gomeri people and ignoring the courts, the shonkier NTSCorp look. The files legally belong to the Gomeri people for cryin out loud. This "lawfare" has been goin on since February 2015.

For instance, NTSCorp are trying to hold a meeting on country to replace the current Applicants who were elected by an overwhelming majority of Gomeri claimants at 2 previous claim group meetings.

There are more than 40,000 Gomeri people. Gomeri is a reasonably sized community with lots of people holding lots of different views and opinions. Fact is there are 40,000 Gomeri people who need to be engaged with and given the opportunity to vote on big decisions currently being raised by NTSCorp in its recent Notice of Authorisation that affects the Gomeri Native Title claim.

Think about it. NTSCorp are based in Sydney and are trying to use a couple of hundred Gomeri people to trash the legal rights of 40,000 Gomeri people. NTSCorp have announced an important meeting with little notice and one advert in The Koori Mail. In Gomeri country, NTSCorp have not advertised a Tamworth meeting. Does it sound like NTSCorp want to hold a fully representative and informed claim group meeting to you?

Why do NTSCorp want to sack the Gomeri Applicant group? It is because NTSCorp want to control Gomeri country through having a tame group of Applicants who will not question anything they do or say, a group who will not challenge NTSCorp's politically correct views.

We the elected group of Gomeri Native Title Applicants are not interested in NTSCorp's politically correct views. We are only interested in doing things that benefit the Gomeri people. We will not be bowing before NTSCorp's continual threats and "lawfare."

The Gomeri Native Title Applicants were smart enough and strong enough to sack NTSCorp – and other mob's claim groups may follow this Gomeri lead – and this is probably the reason NTSCorp are holding a meeting to try and replace the Gomeri Native Title Applicant group.

NTSCorp have tried lots of paperwork tricks over the years. For example, they drafted “resolutions which were put the last claim group meeting in May 2013 that were found to be unenforceable by the Federal Court’s Judge Jagot on 10 March 2015.

Their “unenforceable” resolution said the Gomeri Applicant group could never sack NTSCorp – no matter how lazy and incompetent they were.

Imagine that eh. A tantrum-throwing Aboriginal organisation trying to strike down the Gomeri people’s international legal right to self-determination. Using a couple of hundred votes to try and steal away 40,000 Gomeri people’s right to natural justice and procedural fairness. What do ya call that?

We are Gomeri and we are not giving up on our country. We are not giving up on the rights of our people. We’re not giving up on Gomeri culture and heritage or traditional Gomeri law. The Gomeri Native Title Applicants are not giving up on our legal obligations to build a better future for all the Gomeri people by putting the interests of the Gomeri people first, second and third.

With your help and support, justice will eventually prevail because the Gomeri people clearly do not want to be controlled and manipulated by NTSCorp in Sydney and their handful of supporters who do not represent all the rest of the Gomeri claim group.

What can you do to help? Talk to your family and friends about the facts. If you know people who like FACEBOOK, please tell make sure they like our FACEBOOK page which is Gomeri Dreaming. There are fresh stories and news updates posted on Gomeri Dreaming regularly. You can also sign one of the ‘just say no to NTSCorp’ petitions that are circulating around Gomeri country. We would appreciate you writing about NTSCorp on your Facebook page if you have one. Posting comments on the Gomeri Dreaming Facebook page is good 2.

And you can help by going the NTSCorp meeting on Tuesday 19 July and Wednesday 20 July at the Tamworth Regional Entertainment Centre, Greg Norman Drive Tamworth.

Ring 1800 111 844 to register for the meeting and get assistance with your travel and accommodation costs.

YALOO