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## MT CARSTENSZ FORUM: TRANSCRIPT ACU Art Gallery, 12 December 2015

### VICTOR LASA, MEDIATOR, INTRODUCTION

Well I'm being recorded as you can see, so have to be careful what I say; same for you, speakers, apparently; no, joking. Well thank you very much everybody for coming. It's difficult to leave your house on a Saturday, but it's great that we are all here, because we are having a very interesting fascinating topic today with great speakers.

Before we start I'd like to recognize the traditional owners of the land, the Kulin nation, and their elders past and present.

My name is Victor Lasa. I'm a researcher and a PhD candidate with the Centre for Global Research at RMIT University. And Louise was kind enough to ask me to moderate today, to facilitate the event. An event that I find really really exciting. It's a fascinating topic. Today we see it as a journey of discovery in one sense, because for me, as an average citizen, and I think for many other people, West Papua is one of the last frontiers left, one of those mysteries left, that we don't know much about from many points of view: anthropological, ecological, geographical, even political in this case.

So today we are going to explore many things. That's why we have explorers, mountaineers, we have scientific photographers. But it's also a day to uncover things, because as you know within West Papua there are many things that are not always in the media, that are extremely unfair, and one strong example is the situation with Mt Carstensz. So that's why we also have journalists and researchers with us today.

It's a situation that is sometimes seen as a local drama, but we need to be aware that it's just a local presentation of a global problem. These problems with big corporations exploiting natural resources have been in many countries. So these problems are served by countries we call developing countries and countries we call 'developed' like Australia. In Australia we call ourselves 'developed', but as we well know there are many problems with mining and recognition of land ownership, of Aboriginals, and environmental impact and so on. So it's a thing served by countries of very different kinds.

So in the first hour today we'll have the presentations, then we'll start a little discussion together with the public, and at the end we'll do a little workshop for everyone to suggest how things could be improved once we've been informed about it, and how we can move forward.

We would like to start with a local witness, with Muma Yusefa, as many people know her. Her real name is Yusefa Alomang. She's a local community leader. She's been an activist for decades now. She suffered the repression of the Indonesian authorities, from the police and the military. She's suffered, together with her community, the horrible consequences of mining, the lack of drinkable water and food, and she suffered the death of five children if I am not mistaken due to sickness provoked by the situation of the mine. So we thought we owed it to her to start with her history. We have a video that Izzy Brown here recorded of an interview she made over there.

The video starts with a local academic explaining the significance of the glacier, and then Muma Yusefa explains why the situation is important for her own people. I would like to mention that due to her activism Muma Yusefa received the 2001 Goldman Environmental Prize, which is a prestigious prize given to activists defending rights against environmental attacks.