Boost for Indonesia’s traditional communities

By CLAYTON BENNETT

A CHARLES Darwin University law lecturer will discuss ways that Indonesia can involve its traditional communities in major economic developments.

Daniai Kelly will make his presentation at the conference, ASEAN’s Traditional Community in a Global World: Facing ASEAN Community 2015, in Denpasar, Bali this week. Conference speakers will explore how the economic integration of countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations may impact on their traditional communities.

The address comes as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) aims to create a single market economy between its member nations, of which Indonesia is part.

“It’s a matter of identity and authority,” Mr Kelly said. “Indonesian people derive a lot of their identity from their local community and that local community has a large amount of authority.”

He said Indonesia could adopt laws similar to Australia’s Native Title Act to ensure traditional communities’ land rights were protected in the face of economic development.

“Indonesia has a type of legal category for recognising traditional community land, but it is often undermined by other laws, such as forestry laws,” Mr Kelly said. “Sometimes the same piece of land can be subject to two laws. A harmonisation of the law is required with a view to better protection for traditional communities.”

He said Australia could benefit from a growth of the middle class in ASEAN countries during this anticipated period of economic development.

“We’re at a time where the numbers of Indonesians who are able to pay for Australian goods and services are very significant,” he said. “With a population of more than 240 million, there’s a large potential market.”