

# National Indigenous Leaders Meeting

## Summary Report

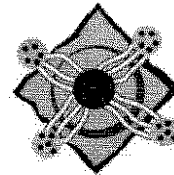
A report on discussion and outcomes of the National Indigenous Leaders Meeting in Adelaide on the 11 – 14 June 2004

Coordinated and Facilitated by:



Reconciliation Australia

and the



Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre

Sponsored by the

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE  
ADMINISTRATION OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

REC'D: 15/2/05

FROM: Reconciliation Australia

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# FOREWARD

This report is a summary of discussion and the outcomes from the National Indigenous Leaders Meeting held in Adelaide on 11 – 14 June 2004. The announcements by the Federal Government about the pending closure of ATSIS and intention to abolish ATSIC was the prevailing motivation for holding this meeting. The meeting was facilitated by Reconciliation Australia (RA) and the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre (AIRC).

The planning of the meeting was led by a Steering Committee, comprised of Mick Dodson & Jackie Huggins (Chairpersons), Jason Glanville, Sam Jefferies, Lowitja O'Donoghue and Mark Yettica-Paulson. *(A summary document explaining the background to the establishment of this meeting and the selection of the Steering Committee can be found in the Attachments section of this report, Pg. 20 & 22).*

The objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- To understand and identify our opinions as Indigenous people about the status of Indigenous Affairs
- To clarify the role the meeting participants want a national representative body to play and what outcomes they are expected to deliver
- To understand and critically analyse the current environment, including the government's and the opposition's proposals and the implications of these
- To consider a collective response to this based on – in part – the lessons we have learnt
- To evaluate international, national and regional models for representation
- To identify the commonalities from the models that should be pursued
- To match preferred models to the expectations of the meeting participants
- To develop actions that will progress the agenda for National Indigenous representation

Up to 200 Indigenous people from around Australia attended this meeting, most attending at their own expense or through the support of their organisations. The meeting was arranged within a very short timeframe, resulting in an absence of many invited delegates and Indigenous people who expressed an interest in attending, but were unable to.

This report is not a comprehensive document that aims to represent the views of all Indigenous individuals and communities. What this report does do is serve as a summary of discussion and outcomes from the Leaders meeting. The emphasis of the meeting, and consequently this report, is the consideration of a national Indigenous representative body.

With this in mind, the meeting participants acknowledged the need for a thoroughly planned and implemented consultative process to ensure well informed consideration of what a national Indigenous representative body should do and consideration of options for what form a new body could take. The Steering Committee has agreed to lead this process in an interim capacity in the short to medium term, a decision endorsed by participants on day four of the Leaders Meeting. From hereon in, the committee will be referred to as the Interim Steering Committee.

Many individuals, organizations, and volunteers contributed to the success of this meeting. A list of acknowledgments is found at the back of this report (Pg. 20 & 31). However, critical to our success at this meeting was the committed participation of all those people who took the time to attend and contribute and we acknowledge this also.

This meeting was only a small step forward in the development of an effective, credible and relevant national Indigenous representative body. The outcomes of this meeting will greatly depend on our future actions and the participation of our communities, organisations and stakeholders. The journey we take together from here will continue to require us to extend our goodwill with one another, ongoing communication and the determination to keep our collective voices heard.

We hope you will stay with us, and join us on this important journey.

**Jackie Huggins**  
Co-Chair

**Michael Dodson**  
Co-Chair

**National Indigenous Leaders Meeting Steering Committee**

# Opening Comments

## National Indigenous Leaders Meeting Summary of Opening Address by Mick Dodson

Adelaide - 11 June 2004

I pay my respects to the Kurna peoples its good once again to be on your ancestral lands.

It's important to start today by giving you an idea of how this weekend came about. In response to the confusion created by the abolition of ATSIC and the proposed new administrative arrangements, Jackie Huggins and I convened a meeting in Melbourne on 8 and 9 May with the assistance of Reconciliation Australia.

A group of concerned Indigenous individuals gathered to discuss possible responses to these new developments and to start a process of identifying strategic opportunities for us to intervene and play a real role in the decisions that concern us most.

The meeting was never considered to be representative of all Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people nor did we consider we had any power or authority to make decisions on behalf of anyone. But we believed it was important to stand up and engage in the process rather than screaming from the sidelines.

We discussed a number of key issues including:

- Loss of a national representative voice (something that was apparently happening without any reference to us)
- What forms of representation and governance are required to enable a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice
- The radical 'bold experiment' proposed by the Commonwealth, the haste with which this has been planned and is being pursued, and the lack of informed policy debate. This is about their administrative arrangements that are already being put in place.
- The need to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We fully appreciate how important process is to us.
- The accountability and leadership in government, government agencies, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organizations.
- The risk of losing good working program arrangements that will also be dismantled with the abolition of ATSIC.

The critical underlying principle identified at the meeting was - *we will decide who represents us.*

The meeting agreed that it was important to organise a broader national meeting and this gathering is the result.

We recognize that this is probably not an ideal process but we recognised that we couldn't afford to let this opportunity pass without our voice being heard.

I would like to acknowledge, on behalf of the steering committee, that this meeting wouldn't have been possible without the generous financial and in-kind support of ATSIC.

The AILC and RA are simply the conveners and facilitators of this meeting. We are not here to push an RA or AILC agenda. Our job has been to get people together to talk about what we might do. We know the criticisms, we've heard them all before but we have to be serious about this opportunity – it's bigger than individual ego's, it's more important than factional interests, we have to get it right for all our sakes.

Having said that, I would however, like to make a few observations.

We are not here to lament the demise of ATSIC, we are here to apply our collective experience and intent to the design of an Indigenous voice that is truly about Indigenous people.

And, let's be honest, while the final blows for ATSIC may have been struck by the politicians and bureaucrats in Canberra we as Indigenous people are not blameless in this story.

We know what needs to be done to address the problems facing our people. We have to be ready with a solid answer every time some one asks the question, so what do Aboriginal people want.

Over the next four days we have an opportunity to create something that works and offers real hope for our people. We will have a lot of work to do following this meeting but it's an important start.

I firmly believe in a national representative voice, something that belongs to us. Something that can't be torn down by any future government regardless of their political flavour.

I'm looking forward to being part what I believe is an historic opportunity. Now I'll hand over Jackie to share some of her thoughts on the next four days.

Thank you

## **National Indigenous Leaders Meeting Summary of Opening Address by Jackie Huggins**

Adelaide - 11 June 2004

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, the Kaurna peoples.

I, like Mick, am really looking forward to being part of what I think is an important and timely step forward in this critical debate.

Many of us have been doing this work for a long time – we've been to a lot of meetings. This one has to be different – we have to make it work.

We owe it to ourselves to protect all the important gains we fought so hard to win and for the future successes we will have in partnership with these deadly younger people.

I want to remind you all what we said in the invitation for this meeting, we are all here to participate as individuals, we need to leave our (sometimes many) hats at the door and engage as concerned black fellas.

Every Indigenous voice at this meeting has a right to be heard. We each bring an important combination of experience and expertise to the discussion.

Having said that I, like Mick, would like to share some information about the process that got us here.

Obviously, in preparing for this weekend, the steering committee has had to give some thought to how the meeting might run and what it might achieve.

While there are any number of potential and often unexpected outcomes from a meeting like this we will not have done our job if we walk away from this weekend with anything less than an absolutely clear agenda for the next steps.

And critical to that agenda is the identification of the fundamental guiding principles for a legitimate national Indigenous voice and the process to carry them forward.

To get us to that point we have designed a program that will take us through a range of issues with some clear objectives that underpin the discussion. The objectives we've identified to guide our work include:

- to identify and understand how we feel about the current status of Indigenous affairs;
- to clarify what role we want our national representative voice to play and what we expect it to deliver;
- to understand and critically analyse our current environment, including the government and opposition proposals and their implications;
- to evaluate regional, national and international models for representation;
- to identify which elements of the models we want to pursue;
- to match the preferred models with our expectations; and

- to agree on actions that will progress our agenda.

We have also agreed on some important rules for our conduct. Those rules will be discussed in greater detail by the facilitators but fundamentally they are about being respectful of each other.

Thank you



# Summary of Discussion

The following section of this report provides an overview of the discussions from each day of the meeting. These summaries were drawn from comprehensive recording of the meeting by a number of staff and volunteers. As was stated earlier in this report, the summaries are not comprehensive themselves but are an accurate overview of the discussion that took place during plenary (sessions open to all participants) sessions.

## Summary of Day One

It was clear from discussions that the announcement by Mark Latham to abolish ATSIC, and the subsequent action taken by the Howard government to abolish ATSIC, concern us greatly.

Their actions signal a rejection of Indigenous leadership and our aspirations for self-determination, and are about returning the Indigenous people and the many Indigenous communities to assimilationist regimes, under the control of 'white' people and their institutions. The proposal to administer Indigenous Affairs across the country with the aid of an appointed Advisory Body by the government is testimony to this fact.

During discussion of this move by the government many raised concerns about the **diminution** of our rights as Indigenous peoples to represent ourselves. Some felt an urgency to stop the current process of dismantling ATSIC, and argued that whilst ATSIC needed reform the process should have been about improving the system not dismantling it. Others were happy to put it behind us.

The situation has created great uncertainty among our people. People reported feeling confused about the newly proposed system and how that would impact on access to resources. Programs and Services have been thrown into disarray. Many are worried about the cultural and language program priorities. This was followed by questions about the value being placed on Indigenous traditions and practices.

Many expressed confusion about what is to be the next stage in the implementation of the government's new arrangements. This raised further questions such as:

How are local services going to be provided in the future?

How will the new arrangements work with DIMIA, "We are not ethnics, migrants, or refugees"?

It was added, "mainstreaming our programs is not the way, we have already been there. We fought that battle and yet here we find ourselves again".

People are not confident with the assurance that ATSIC resources will be preserved for us.

Regional council members recognise the achievements to date and the infrastructure built up over the years. The value of all the effort has not been acknowledged by the government. Further caution was urged in relation to the new arrangements due to the seeming lack of understanding of the full impact that will result from the decision to abolish ATSIC.

Other delegates reported that they were tired of being pushed around and felt frustrated. Some asked, 'where is the Indigenous voice', and others called for improved communication between us. All noted the importance of coming together at this gathering. Comments from the plenary at this time included:

- We don't know what we're doing, where we are going, we need a strong body, a positive body, we need to stick together and work on one track
- We need to protect regional and local structures
- We need a new body, and its legitimacy must come from the Indigenous people
- We need to be united in our approach
- We need to understand history to know where we have been and where we need to go - let's not replicate the past
- We need a new body to represent communities not individuals, an inclusive movement
- We need to move from reactive agendas to proactive ones
- We need young people to be involved in the decision-making process
- The new representative body needs to inspire young people
- We need to rebuild integrity of leadership and national models of representation, we need to address the mistrust built up over the years
- We need to separate service provision from advocacy and our political agendas
- We need constitutional recognition of rights, a treaty
- We need to identify a process for taking the actions of this meeting forward and to use NAIDOC week to launch any agenda from this weekend
- Strengthening regions is the best solution

In our last session of the day, we turned to the values, qualities and skills that we thought would make better leaders. Many noted the crucial linchpin to our success will be a two-way respect and partnership between community and leaders. We then began to concentrate on what we will expect from a national representative body, the governance structures, and how community needs will be represented.

This was an enormously valuable first day on the future directions of Indigenous people and Indigenous Affairs. The day ended with a clear message to continue our efforts patiently as we begin to scrutinise 'the next bold experiment', the government's position, and their proposed 'new arrangements'.

## Summary of Day Two

How do we deal with the axing of ATSIC? What is happening with the changing administrative landscape? And how do we form a national representative body that is independent of government regulation? These were the kinds of questions at the forefront of our minds during days two and three.

In preparation for our group discussions, Mr Geoff Scott was invited to present an overview of the proposed changes by the government, the new administrative arrangements as a result of the closure of ATSIIS and the intent to abolish ATSIC.

He began with a historical outline of the previous and then existing ATSIC structure, Regional Councils and the links to Indigenous Housing Loans (IHL), Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), Office of Torres Strait Islander Affairs (OTSIA), Indigenous Land Council (ILC), Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board (TSIAB), and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS); and then moved to outline the configuration recommended by the ATSIC Review Team before sketching out the new arrangements of the 'next bold experiment'. His summary of the ATSIC Amendment Bill 2004 helped inform delegates of the legislative process underway to dismantle ATSIC.

This provided delegates with an opportunity to raise a number of comments and questions:

- What happens to the Regional Council's role over the next 12 months –is it to induct the next institutional process and then dump Regional Councils?
- Where do health services fit into this?
- In the new process, if the Secretaries and the Ministerial Task Force are monitoring programs, services and effectiveness is this not the same as agencies monitoring themselves?
- What happens to assets accumulated over the years?
- Why did the government ignore the findings of the ATSIC Review?
- What happens to community-controlled organisations?

The process of examining the ATSIC structure for both its weaknesses and strengths took place with delegates working in smaller groups. The failure of ATSIC, for many, was the failure of not questioning our leaders, acts of nepotism, failure to evaluate the quality of our leadership. Some noted that we did not do enough to make government and their agencies accountable. In addition to this, former structures did not ensure inclusive participation. Noted examples of the low levels of participation in our structures included women and young people.

Some suggested “complacency” and “taking our eyes off the ball” played a role in the short-comings of ATSIC. Yet others emphasised that “the ongoing amendments over the years of the Aboriginal Incorporations Act from a process to assist self-determination agendas to one that is now largely a self-management arrangement that requires Indigenous organisations to report to government” has significantly interfered with progress and positive long term results. For others, “ATSIC did not fail; it was set up to fail”.

Delegates however were also able to recognise the strengths of ATSIC, and pointed to achievements in a number of areas, including:

- it gave us a national identity...
- it was a democratically elected process...
- it brought national and international attention to the rights agenda...
- it had a direct line to the community (although it should have been more accountable to the community...)
- it provided a means for political advocacy...
- it provided hope and voice for the people...
- it enabled a start towards self-determining our own futures”.

Mr Scott was then invited to do a brief session on the past organisations, bodies and government agencies on Indigenous Affairs: National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC), National Aboriginal Conference (NAC), ATSIC, Regional Councils, Aboriginal Land Fund, Aboriginal Loans Commission, Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC), IBA, IHL, Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), and the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC).

This provided a well informed basis for the discussion on alternate models that would be the focus of day three of the meeting.

## Summary of Day Three

Prof Mick Dodson followed discussions on day two with an overview of various international experiences of Indigenous representative governance models: The UN model, the National Congress of American Indians model; the Assembly of First Nations (Canada); the Inuit Circumpolar Conference model; the Sámi Parliament; and, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.

This helped to focus discussions on both the lessons learnt from ATSIC and on the principles for good governance.

Plenary presentations of Indigenous Australian organisational structures were delivered by the following Indigenous leaders:

Liz McNiven & Stephen Ross spoke on developments of the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), a confederation of traditional owner groups, or Indigenous nations. This organisation, they outlined, did not speak for any Indigenous nation but supports each nation to present its own views on the management of the Murray and Darling Rivers valleys.

Darryl Pearce of the South West Land and Sea Council in Western Australia spoke on the establishment of a new relationship with the state government of WA through regional partnership agreements that provide for greater autonomy for the Noongar people.

Malawup Nona from the Torres Strait Islands spoke on the evolving arrangements between TSRA as a regional authority on regional planning and policy direction, and ICCs as service-delivery organisations.

Joe Ross spoke on the Fitzroy experience, and Bunuba Inc. incorporated under the WA Act, to establish Indigenous clan systems as the basis of the communities' governance structure. It included an example of a way forward, an alternate election system that achieves 'cultural match', as well as a governance structure designed to shift communities out of a welfare-dependency model and towards corporation economics.

Sam Jefferies and Michael Stewart from NSW spoke on Murdi Paaki Regional Council's experience with community governance and regional autonomy. They talked about what they had learnt about developing their own agenda, explained what their aspirations are, and what they see as the barriers to self-determination for the Indigenous communities.

Lowitja O'Donaghue outlined an appointment-based model to shed further light on how we could think about future representative models. The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement of South Australia publicly calls for 3 members from each region by self-nomination and application to establish a board, uses representatives of Indigenous communities and organisations as an appointments committee to select candidates on the basis of merit and credential, and its operations and functions are controlled by a constitution written by Indigenous people with significant expertise.

In the workshop sessions, delegates were asked to focus discussion on the elements of models (including leadership models, governance models and structures, etc.) that may be suitable for a national Indigenous representative body, and how it would benefit Indigenous communities.

After much discussion the delegates reported back on their deliberations about key principles they would expect and endorse from within future representative arrangements. Strong support was gained throughout the afternoon for the position that "we needed a nationally elected Indigenous body to represent us".

Some of the ideas delegates brought forward included:

- The need for a "bottom-up" system where the communities "directly elect leaders"
- Desire for a "people-driven system"; devised on the basis of "cultural fit"
- "participation would have to be compulsory".

Part of the test of success for a future representational model would require the achievement of an equal balance of elders, youth, women and men in positions of leadership and in participation of the system.

There was strong support for a national body to gain its legitimacy, authority and validity within the Indigenous community and to not rest on the will of government structures.

Some delegates stated that they preferred the option of a Charter where we could negotiate and write our own principles and organisational characteristics, "to embed the right to self-determination", and "to ensure future organisational structures remain community-focused". Some saw the value of working towards this through the structure of a statutory body while others believed the target should be working on achieving change to the Australian constitution.

It however was clear to all that placing the "well-being of people, families and communities first" were vital aspects to be dealt with in any future system. The "protection of Indigenous knowledge, intellectual and cultural property, and Indigenous rights had to be protected".

Other key messages from the delegates during the discussion of the role of a national Indigenous representative governance structure, was that it has to facilitate actions that allow communities to self-determine their own futures. Many favoured a political advocacy role (at local, national and international levels) and not a service-delivery role.

Many raised funding as a major hurdle to our pathways to a national body. Yet it was clear to all from the discussions that people were determined to find an independent position.

Some preliminary elements of an Indigenous representative model gleaned from delegate discussions on Day 2 & 3 are as follows:

- Representative of Indigenous communities and established under our own Charter/constitution separate from government (to incl. Bill of Rights and Protection of Indigenous Knowledge, Intellectual and Cultural Property, etc.)
- Re-establish, promote and protect national identity as First Peoples
- Support and advocacy roles for Indigenous people, communities and organisations
- Monitoring of legislative and constitutional obligations to/rights of Indigenous people
- Accountable to the Indigenous communities

## Summary of Day Four

Day 4 was organised for delegates to finalise discussions, and to scope out an agenda and options for the future.

During this discussion a number of delegates expressed concern about the composition of any future representative structure, and of the Steering Committee that is working together towards this goal.

Issues of State and Territory based input and representation, as well gender balance were raised. It was agreed that the current Steering Committee would take these concerns into consideration in their future actions and would add new members to the Steering Committee if necessary as they fulfill their obligations as an Interim Committee.

Other matters that were prioritised for attention during Day Four were as follows:

1. Principles for an Independent National Indigenous Representative Body
2. Future National Representative Arrangements: determine the actions/tasks required to move future national representative arrangements forward
3. New Administrative Arrangements: Determine and/or develop the actions/tasks required for engaging in the new administrative arrangements.
4. Senate Inquiry Process: Determine and/or develop the actions/tasks required for engaging in the Senate Inquiry processes

With the exception of priority four, the other areas were addressed and resulted in the decisions as listed below.



## **Key Principles & Values...**

### **... for a National Indigenous Representative Body and a National inclusive process**

1. We the Indigenous People of Australia and we alone have the right to determine who represents us locally, regionally, nationally & internationally.
2. We are determined to establish a sustainable independent National Indigenous Representative Body that reflects the aspirations and values of our peoples.
3. The National Indigenous Representative Body needs to gain its legitimacy from our people.
4. Any process to establish a National Indigenous Representative Body must acknowledge who we are, honour our diversity and commit to inclusive processes for all our people.
5. Our National Indigenous Representative Body must be open, transparent and accountable to the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples.
6. We respect and are committed to the right of our peoples to make free and informed choices for them, their families and communities.
7. We have an obligation to respect and protect our right to self-determination, our human rights, our humanity, our First Peoples' status and our inherent rights that flow from that status.
8. We have a duty to pursue social justice & economic development for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
9. Our duty is to leave a lasting legacy for our grandchildren's grandchildren.

## **Role of the Interim Steering Committee**

The Interim Steering Committee is to coordinate communication with communities

### **What the Interim Steering Committee can/should do:**

- Coordinate administrative arrangements
- Collate information from this weekend
- Organise other meetings with communities to communicate outcomes of this meeting and future processes
- Continue with research on a range of relevant representative models
- Receive and where appropriate act upon information from any consultative process that follows from this meeting
- Establish and maintain an accurate contact list and build on this by adding as many other community members as possible
- Provide feedback to communities
- Maintain flexibility in decision-making relating to the composition of committee members, staff, and expertise
- Coordinate the process of engagement with other bodies, including government
- Investigate sources of fundraising to support the completion of this process

### **What this Committee is not:**

- Not national representative body
- Does not exist once a national representative body is established
- Does not negotiate with governments
- Do not speak or make decisions on behalf of community
- Does not set direction for the community

### **Appropriate Personnel to work under direction of the Working Party:**

- Must come with relevant qualifications and experience
- Are not there to be representatives of their jurisdictions
- Any staff (volunteer or paid) team should have a gender balance and involving young people where possible

### **Coordination Site:**

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra

**Interim Steering Committee to oversee these tasks**

Mick Dodson, Jason Glanville, Jackie Huggins, Lowitja O'Donoghue, Mark Yettica-Paulson

# ATTACHMENTS

## Steering Committee

- Mick Dodson – Chairman, Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre (AIRC)
- Jackie Huggins – Co-Chair, Reconciliation Australia (RA)
- Jason Glanville
- Sam Jefferies
- Lowitja O'Donoghue
- Mark Yettica-Paulson

## Facilitators

### **Lead Facilitators:**

Kerrie Tim  
Eddie Watkin

### **Co-Facilitators:**

Zell Dodd  
Natalie Walker  
Mark Yettica-Paulson

## Staff and Volunteers

### **Staff**

#### **Administration & Project Management**

Peter Beath	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services
Jason Field	Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney
Craig Greene	Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre
Tanya Hosch	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
Marianne Pinnington	Reconciliation Australia

#### **Preparation of daily Report Summaries**

Prof Martin Nakata	Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney
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#### **Research Support**

Patrick Sullivan	Australian National University
Jo Victoria	Australian National University

#### **Volunteers**

Liz Ahern	Natalie Harkin
Damian Amamoo	Doon Hayman
Fiona Buzzacott	Elvin Lucic
Leata Clarke	Sarah Marshall
Dameeli Coates	Patricia May

Kiah Coates  
 Davina Egege  
 Elsie Fisher  
 Eugenia Flynn

Wallace McKittrick  
 Charles Prouse  
 Mark Tutton  
 Christine Urbanowski

**Glossary**

AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies
AILC	Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre
ANU	Australian National University
ATSIC	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSISS	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Services
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
DIMIA	Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
ICC	Indigenous Coordination Centres
IHL	Indigenous Housing Loans
ILC	Indigenous Land Council
MLDRIN	Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations
NAC	National Aboriginal Conference
NACC	National Aboriginal Consultative Committee
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal & Islander Day Observance Committee
OTSIA	Office of Torres Strait Islander Affairs
RA	Reconciliation Australia
TSIAB	Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney

## **Summary of the Indigenous Leaders Meeting of 8 and 9 May 2004**

### **Marriott Hotel, Melbourne**

Mick Dodson and Jackie Huggins convened a meeting in Melbourne on 8 and 9 May 2004 with the assistance of Reconciliation Australia (RA).

A group of concerned Indigenous individuals gathered to discuss possible responses to new developments in Indigenous affairs, particularly the abolition of ATSIC and the new Commonwealth administrative arrangements.

Participants at this meeting were: Ian Anderson, Pat Anderson, Leah Armstrong, Rodney Dillon, Mick Dodson, Jason Glanville, Mick Gooda, Tanya Hosch, Jackie Huggins, Sam Jefferies, Martin Nakata, Lowitja O'Donoghue, Gregory Phillips, Lionel Quartermaine, Pat Turner, and Mark Yettica-Paulson.  
*(RA Secretariat: Jenni Chandler & Claire Tedeschi and Assistant to Lionel Quartermaine: Mary Davies were also in attendance)*

The meeting discussed a number of key issues including:

- The loss of a national representative voice
- What forms of representation and governance are required to enable a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice
- The radical 'bold experiment' proposed by the Commonwealth, the haste with which this has been planned and is being pursued, and the lack of informed policy debate
- The need to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Accountability and leadership within government, bureaucracies, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- The risk of losing good working program arrangements that will also be dismantled with the abolition of ATSIC.

Although it was clearly acknowledged that there is a vital need for a reformed agenda to address the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities it was of critical concern that these new arrangements are being designed and deliberated in the absence of any Indigenous input or direction.

Senior government officials attended at separate intervals to give an overview of the Government's position and the process of the development of the Government's new approaches, including an update on the COAG trials.

The most current recorded positions of both the Coalition and the ALP were considered and analysed in this context.

## **Outcomes**

A process was mapped out to develop ways forward. It was agreed that some opportunities exist in the short and long term to develop improved strategies to address the current issues. The participants selected a Steering Committee to progress these ideas. (Members of this committee are: Mick Dodson, Jason Glanville, Jackie Huggins, Sam Jefferies, Lowitja O'Donoghue and Mark Yettica-Paulson)

# PROGRAM

## National Indigenous Leaders Meeting Adelaide, 11-14 June 2004

### Day 1

Time, session and format	Activity and Purpose
	<p>Objectives: To understand and identify our opinions about the status of Indigenous Affairs To clarify what role we want our national representative voice to play and what we expect it to deliver</p>
8.30am	Registration and Coffee
Session 1 9.30am  PLENARY	<p><b>MEETING OPENING</b> Call to attention and introduce Aunty Josie Agius</p> <p><b>WELCOME TO COUNTRY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GRIEF AND LOSS IN OUR COMMUNITIES INTRODUCE JACKIE AND MICK BACKGROUND</b> Acknowledgement and appreciation to participants Setting the context and tone Clarify the purpose of the meeting from the Steering Committee's perspective – how this meeting came to be</p> <p><b>INTRODUCTION OF THE FACILITATION TEAM</b> Introduce Kerrie Tim and Eddie Watkin – Facilitation Team Leaders Introduce the other Facilitation Team members</p> <p><b>CLARIFYING THE PROGRAM AND RULES OF ENGAGEMENT</b> Facilitation Team takes group through the program Discussion about the meeting processes – feedback from the floor</p>
10.30-11.00am	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
Session 2  WORKSHOP	<p><b>PERSONAL RESPONSES TO OUR CURRENT SITUATION</b> Opportunity for people to express how they're feeling Identify commonalities and recurring themes</p>
12.30-1.30pm	<b>LUNCH</b>
Session 3  WORKSHOP	<b>Session 2 continued</b>
3.30-4.00pm	<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>
Session 4 WORKSHOP  PLENARY	<p><b>WHAT WE WANT FROM OUR LEADERS &amp; OUR REPRESENTATIVE BODY</b></p> <p><b>SUMMARY OF THE DAY</b></p>



	Overview of the day's discussions Where are we going tomorrow	
5.30pm	<b>End Day One</b>	

## Day 2

Time, Session & Format	Activity and Purpose
Session 5 9.00am PLENARY	<p>Objectives:            To understand and critically analyse our current environment, including the government's and the opposition's proposals and the implications of these            To consider a collective response to this based on – in part – the lessons we have learnt</p> <p><b>REFLECTION OF DAY 1</b></p> <p><b>THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ATSIIC ACT</b>            The processes for the legislative changes and what opportunities, if any, this might present</p> <p><b>THE SENATE INQUIRY</b>            Background to Senate Inquiry Processes</p>
11.00- 11.30am	<p><b>MORNING TEA</b></p>
Session 6 PLENARY	<p><b>DISCUSSION OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS</b>            Understanding the implications of this direction particularly with respect to the funding of community based organizations, policy and program development.</p>
1.00-1.45pm	<p><b>LUNCH</b></p>
Session 7 WORKSHOP  WORKSHOP	<p><b>STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ISSUES</b>            Identifying the implications for relationships between Indigenous peoples and state and local governments</p> <p><b>REFLECTING ON OUR PAST POLITICAL MOVEMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS</b>            Identifying the successes and failures of past Indigenous political movements            How do we apply these lessons to our current situation</p>
3.30 – 4.00pm	<p><b>AFTERNOON TEA</b></p>
Session 8 WORKSHOP	<p><b>INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION</b></p> <p><b>SUMMARY OF THE DAY</b>            Overview of the day's discussions</p>

	Where are we going tomorrow
	<b>INTRODUCTION TO DAY 3</b> Overview of the models being presented tomorrow
7.00pm 1am	– Social Function – all details to be advised

### Day 3

Time, Session and Format	<b>Activity and Purpose</b>
Session 9	<b>Objectives:</b> To evaluate international, national and regional models for representation To identify the commonalities from the models we want to pursue
9.00am	<b>REFLECTION OF DAY 2</b>
PLENARY	<b>SPECIAL GUEST PRESENTER</b>
	<b>INTERNATIONAL MODELS</b>
	Looking at a selection of various models in operation in other countries.
10.30-	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
11.00am	
Session 10	
PLENARY	<b>NATIONAL MODELS</b>
	Always reflecting on what lessons we've learnt, strengths, weaknesses, what questions or gaps do the models pose?
1.00-2.00pm	<b>LUNCH</b>
Session 11	National Models Continued
4.00-4.30pm	<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>
Session 12	
WORKSHOP	<b>FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THE MODELS PRESENTED</b>
	What models or elements of models presented are people favouring and why?
	What are some of the key similarities or points of agreement?
	How does this affect our original ideas?
	<b>SUMMARY OF THE DAY</b>
	Overview of the day's discussions
	Where are we going tomorrow

**Day 4**

Time, Session and Format	Activity and Purpose
Session 13  9.00am	<b>Objectives:</b> Match preferred models to our expectations To develop actions that will progress our agenda  <b>REFLECTION OF DAY 3</b>  <b>OUR PREFERRED MODEL</b> Setting the future direction for the development of a proposed national model for Indigenous governance in Australia
10.30- 11.00am	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
Session 14	<b>CLARIFYING THE INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS</b> Tasks; Timeframes; Resources Required; Responsibility
12.30- 1.30pm	<b>LUNCH</b>
Session 15	<b>STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEETING OUTCOMES</b> What are our next steps? What are our plans of action?  <b>SUMMARY OF THE DAY</b> Overview of the day's discussions
4.00pm	Thanks and Close of Meeting

## **Rules of Engagement;** adopted by the meeting on Day One

Be punctual

Participate fully and be actively engaged

Behave responsibly

Be respectful of facilitators, presenters, staff and volunteers

Make your comments brief and to the point

Stay Sober

- No grog or drugs

Have respect for each others Indigenous identity and humanity

Have mutual respect for each other through:

- Listening to each other (one person talking at a time);
- Being polite and respecting each others opinions;
- No personal attacks;
- No name calling;
- No swearing;
- No shouting;
- No sexism;
- No racism;
- No violence or threats of violence;
- No bullying

Have your mobile phone turned off during session times

No smoking outside of designated areas

The Interim Steering Committee  
10 June 2004

## **Acknowledgements**

This meeting has been made possible by the hard work, contributions, sponsorship and leadership of the following organisations:

- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Services
- Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre
- Reconciliation Australia
- Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney
- Precise Media Management, SA
- National Indigenous Youth Movement of Australia

## PARTICIPANT LIST

Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to collate a complete participant list. If you know anyone who attended and does not appear on the list, please advise us.

Additionally, if you receive this report and would like to be added to our mailing list, please fill in the attached form found at the back of the report and return it to us as soon as possible. Our preferable contact points are:

[indigrep@reconciliation.org.au](mailto:indigrep@reconciliation.org.au) or  
Phone Peter Beath on 02 6273 9200  
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Jason	Glanville	ACT	Neita	Scott	NSW
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Steve	Larkin	ACT	Anne	Weldon	NSW
Kerri	McIlveney	ACT	Jim	Wright	NSW
Liz	McNiven	ACT	Lawerence	Costa	NT
Monica	Morgan	ACT	Kimberley	Hunter	NT
Patrick	Sullivan	ACT	Clarry	Robinya	NT
Kerrie	Tim	ACT	Des	Rogers	NT
Jo	Victoria	ACT	Darryl	Ryder	NT
	Yettica-		Tracker	Tilmouth	NT
Mark	Paulson	ACT	Russell	Belleair	QLD
Tony	Amatto	NSW	Elaine	Corrie	QLD
Leah	Armstrong	NSW	Steve	Hirvonen	QLD
Damien	Barnes	NSW	Jackie	Huggins	QLD
Stephen	Blunden	NSW	Tony	Johnson	QLD
Eddie	Briggs	NSW	Steve	Mothe	QLD
Patricia	Capper	NSW	Maluwap	Nona	QLD
Robert	Carroll	NSW			
Margaret	Cutmore	NSW	Lionel	Quartermaine	QLD
Bob	Davis	NSW	Edward	Smallwood	QLD
Cathy	Eatock	NSW	Francis	Tapim	QLD
Marcia	Ella-Duncan	NSW	Patricia	Thompson	QLD
Jason	Field	NSW	Eddie	Watkin	QLD
Cliff	Foley	NSW	Parry	Agius	SA
Raylene	Gordon	NSW	Anthony	Ah Kit	SA
Sean	Gordon	NSW	Liz	Ahern	SA
Sam	Jefferies	NSW	Diat	Alferink	SA
Warren	Mundine	NSW	Damian	Amamoo	SA
Heidi	Norman	NSW	Cheryl	Axleby	SA
Kellie	Pipe	NSW	Lee-Ann	Buckskin	SA
Stephen	Ryan	NSW	Pat	Buckskin	SA
Geoff	Scott	NSW	Peter	Buckskin	SA



Fiona	Buzzacott	SA	Alf	Bamblett	VIC
Leata	Clarke	SA	Shaun	Braybrook	VIC
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Zell	Dodd	SA	Trevor	Edwards	VIC
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Elsie	Fisher	SA	Syd	Jackson	VIC
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Neil	Gillespie	SA	Jodie	Ryan	Vic
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Patricia	May	SA	Farley	Garlett	WA
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			Marilyn	Stuart	
			James	Von Senden	