

TUCAR NEWSLETTER

NSW TRADE UNION COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL RIGHTS
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NSW Aboriginal Land Council BLACK PAPER on Greiner Government's discussion paper *New Directions in Aboriginal Affairs*

The NSW Liberal Government, led by Premier Nick Greiner, has already attacked State Aboriginal Land Councils, accusing them of mismanagement and trying to remove their independent funding. This month, the government has issued a discussion paper entitled *New Directions in Aboriginal Policy* which claims to be the result of wide consultation and to offer a number of "options". The following document is the **BLACK PAPER** released by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) in response to the Zammit document (Liberal MP Paul Zammit, the Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Premier on Aboriginal Affairs, prepared the discussion paper).

★ The Greiner Government claims it conducted a "comprehensive program of consultations" before releasing its discussion paper on Aboriginal affairs.

★ NSWALC representative Manuel Ritchie described the "consultations" more accurately as "a round of confrontations".

★ Condemnation of Liberal MP Paul Zammit's so-called consultations has been virtually unanimous. Here are some examples:

★ Father Frank Fletcher, who attended a meeting with Bishop John Heaps: "He didn't listen at all... Our appeal to moral principles appeared naive to this Catholic politician."

★ Murray Chapman, who met Zammit twice; once with Aboriginal public servants and once with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, where he is the Aboriginal policy advisor: "It was a dead loss ... dissatisfaction was expressed at the way the so-called consultations had been carried out."

★ Father Paul Devitt, who attended a meeting at Dubbo: The consultation process showed "the contempt that the government really has for the whole issue. Really they are paying lip service to wanting to hear about Aboriginal needs but by their actions they are saying that they don't want to listen."

★ Ruth Naden, who attended a meeting at Dubbo: "Greiner sends him out here ... he knows nothing about Aboriginal people. He's not asking the people what they want. He's telling them what they want."

★ Norma Walford, who attended a meeting at Wilcannia: "He was more or less trying to mislead people."

★ Roger Brandy, who attended the Nowra meeting: "He was abrupt and he gave me the impression that he thought we were all a bunch of drongos and that he was just going through this exercise for the sake of it."

★ Robyn Williams, who attended a meeting at St Marys: "No one from any land council was invited. I found out about it by accident at 10 pm the night before. It was deliberately stacked against land councils."

★ David Clerk, who attended the meeting at Albury: "It was pretty weak really. I think Zammit already knew what he was going to do ... he was just going through the motions."

MAINSTREAMING COULD END KOORI UNITS

★ The Greiner Government is committed to "mainstreaming" services to Aboriginal people in NSW.

★ Yet the government's discussion paper on Aboriginal affairs says "mainstream" government services to Kooris are "duplicated, fragmented, overlapping and counter-productive".

★ As well, the paper says the government is considering cutting staff in those departments.

★ "Mainstream" services rarely cater to Kooris; and few Kooris use "mainstream" services.

★ So how successful will such "mainstream" services be?

★ The government has already "mainstreamed" the Women's Co-ordination Unit which was part of the Premier's Department.

★ The women's unit no longer exists.

★ Therefore, "mainstreaming" could be used to abolish all Koori units in government departments, for example TAFE, Health, Housing.

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NSW Land Council BLACK PAPER

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CONSULTATIONS WEAK REPORT INEPT

- ★ Paul Zammit's report on his three-month "consultation" with the Aboriginal people is laughably inept.
- ★ It could have been written by a desk-bound bureaucrat in an afternoon, saving the people of NSW a small fortune and the Coalition Government considerable embarrassment.
- ★ There are no facts, just silly statements like: "Some people support land rights; some people don't."
- ★ The report on the so-called consultations is on pages 54, 55, 56 and 57 of the government's discussion paper on Aboriginal affairs.
- ★ Paul Zammit describes the paper as "an essential feature" of the government's "comprehensive consultative process".
- ★ Because the paper is so poor, it proves that the government's "comprehensive consultative process" was simply a cosmetic gesture.

HOW THE GOVERNMENT LIED ABOUT OPTION A

- ★ The Greiner Government has given NSW Kooris four options on land rights.
- ★ Option A is to leave the Aboriginal Land Rights Act as it is, according to the government's discussion paper on Aboriginal affairs.
- ★ However, in the same paper the government says it will "replace the present Aboriginal Land Rights Legislation".
- ★ That means there can be no Option A.
- ★ Which means the consultations were a farce, as is the discussion paper.
- ★ The paper contains at least six statements indicating that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act will be repealed.

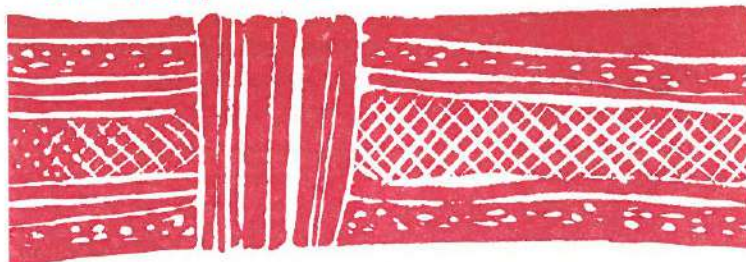
40,000 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE MEAN NOTHING

- ★ The discussion paper says the government wants to show Kooris "how to better manage their land".
- ★ The obvious question is: "What land?"
- ★ You don't need a Gregory's to work out who manages the land better.
- ★ The record of the Aboriginal people of Australia covers 40,000 years and is outstanding.
- ★ The record of the non-Aboriginal people covers 200 years and has resulted in the destruction of forests and a serious breakdown in the stability of the soil.



GREINER ATTACKS KOORI DEMOCRACY

- ★ The government's discussion paper on Aboriginal affairs criticises land councils for being both too centralised and too diverse.
- ★ That is as logical as saying someone is both too tall and too short.
- ★ It indicates that the Coalition Government sees Kooris as failures, no matter what they do.
- ★ The paper says the "isolation" of many land councils makes them "vulnerable" and difficult to service.
- ★ Isolation is a fact of life in sprawling NSW.
- ★ Unlike the government, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council accepts that country people have democratic rights.
- ★ NSWALC will continue to allow country people to participate on an equal footing, even though that is a difficult and costly exercise.



ZAMMIT PAPER SUPPORTS LAND RIGHTS

- ★ Paul Zammit is either a fool or a secret supporter of land rights.
- ★ Either way, his discussion paper on Aboriginal affairs is a sound case for the retention — and expansion — of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act:
- ★ Presuming he is not a fool, why would he support land rights?
- ★ The obvious answer is that he realised the justness of the land rights cause during his three-month "consultation".
- ★ A second possibility is that he has been intimidated by the strength of the Koori people.
- ★ A third possibility is that religious belief has encouraged Catholic Paul Zammit to fall in line with the views of his Church which supports land rights.
- ★ A fourth possibility is that Paul Zammit has been sickened by the prejudice of some of his colleagues. As far back as June he was complaining about them. He had this to say at a meeting with NSWALC: "Now I've been threatened by Members of Parliament who have come into my office and have said 'If you dare, Zammit. If you dare give the Aborigines anything, I'll have your neck'. And I've had that threat repeatedly."

THE \$1.2 BILLION FAILURE

- ★ Over the last ten years, the Commonwealth and the NSW Governments have spent at least \$1.2 billion on Aboriginal affairs in this State.

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NSW Land Council **BLACK PAPER**

- ★ That is \$3,000 for every Koori child and adult in the last year.
- ★ Despite that high spending, most departments have failed.
- ★ The police, however, have worked overtime.
- ★ The imprisonment rate for Kooris is eight times higher than for non-Kooris, with most being gaoled for minor offences.
- ★ On a prisoner-to-population ratio, there were 17 Koori prisoners to each non-Koori prisoner in 1986.
- ★ Why is it that the police work so hard while the other departments perform poorly?
- ★ Take employment. Almost eight out of ten Koori men are unemployed. By comparison, only one out of ten non-Aboriginal men is unemployed.
- ★ Take health. On average, Kooris die 17 years earlier than non-Kooris.
- ★ Given this poor record, why does the Greiner Government want these departments to run Aboriginal affairs?
- ★ Note: During his consultations, Paul Zammit continually harped about land council funds, asking the question, "What the hell is happening to that money?" Perhaps he should ask that question of the government departments.

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ZAMMIT'S FOUR OPTIONS

OPTION A

This option is straightforward.

- ★ Everything remains the same.

Some questions raised about this option:

Does this guarantee that all existing services will remain?

Does this guarantee funding of existing services, given we can expect this government to cut back funding in the welfare area generally?

Is this really being offered as an option? If so, why does the government include in the report:

- (a) its commitment to abolish land rights?
- (b) its commitment to mainstreaming all services?

OPTION B

This option includes two areas of change:

- ★ Changing the Land Rights Act by reducing the number of land councils.
- ★ Increasing the influence of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, giving it a more active role in all areas.

Some questions raised by this option:

Does this option echo the moves attempted by the government in its first days in office when it tried to move financial control away from the land councils to the Office of Aboriginal Affairs?

What are the implications of the Office taking a co-ordinating role in all Aboriginal matters?

OPTION C

This option is both complicated and vague. It includes:

- ★ Abolishing land rights.

- ★ Abolishing the present arrangements in NSW Aboriginal affairs. (This could be taken to mean abolishing the Office of Aboriginal Affairs.)

★ A new State Aboriginal Affairs Act would be introduced which would include a commission similar to ATSIC. It appears this commission would be the consultative body to oversee all Aboriginal affairs.

★ All services would be mainstreamed into general community services.

★ All Land Council assets would be transferred to the Commission.

★ This Commission would be phased out over a period of time.

Some questions raised by this option:

Would the Commission have elected members? Will they make up the majority?

Who will hold the titles to land and other property?

Will the present level of funding from the Land Rights Act be maintained?

Will the present level of funding to other services be maintained?

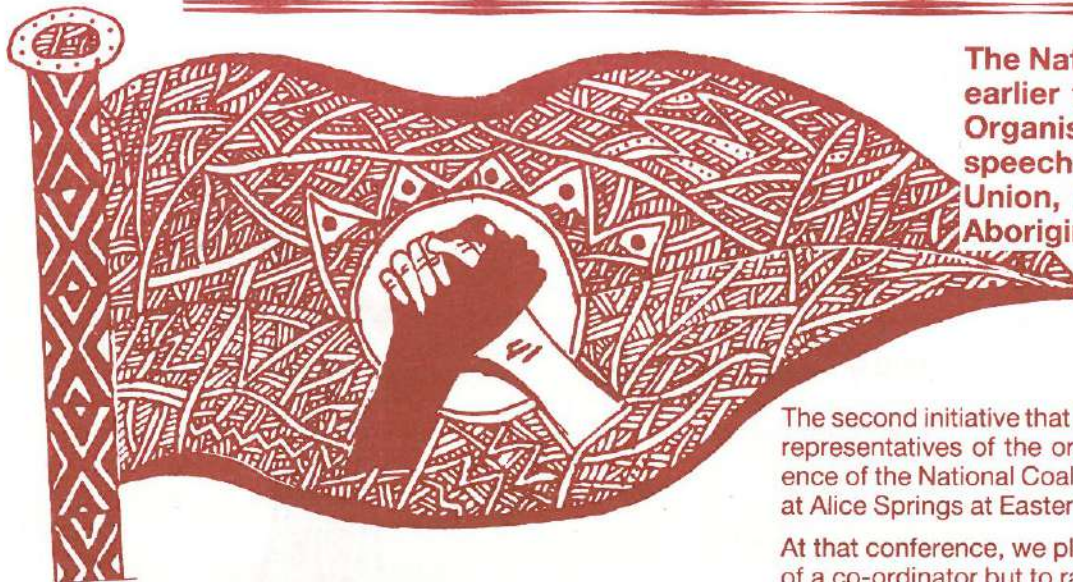
What guarantees are there that Aboriginal funding will end up in communities with mainstreaming across the board?

OPTION D

This option basically suggests that land rights and Aboriginal services be abolished.

- ★ Services would be mainstreamed or transferred to Commonwealth responsibility.

National Unions Coalition with t



The National Trade Union Coalition was formed earlier this year at a meeting in Sydney. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Building, Organisations and the Building, and speeches made on that occasion by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and Aboriginal Affairs Gerry Hand.

STAN SHARKEY I am the Convenor of the National Trade Union Coalition with the Aboriginal Movement — that is an organisation of, as the name implies, trade unions which was formed earlier this year for the purpose of assisting in the campaign to right the wrongs of 200 years of alienation of Aboriginal rights and Aboriginal culture.

We welcome you this morning to the launch of the campaign of NUCAM. NUCAM was formed immediately following the principled position adopted by Gerry Hand refusing to take part in official ceremonies to celebrate the bicentenary and indicating that his efforts would be concentrating on correcting the wrongs.

The trade union movement, like all other sections of the community — that is the European-Australian community — have a lot to answer for even if it is only because of adopting a complacent stance during 200 years of not only occupation but also of cruel discrimination against the Aboriginal people, efforts to destroy their culture and, as is known, if you destroy a people's culture, you destroy that people.

Those who organised NUCAM did so on the basis of assisting to develop a campaign within the community, within the trade union movement initially, to raise the consciousness of people as to what is involved in the campaign for Aboriginal land rights and restoration of dignity and equality to the Aboriginal people.

The first project that NUCAM launched was a campaign for funds within the trade union movement, within those 15 unions which are affiliated, for the purpose of employing a co-ordinator, a liaison officer, to assist to develop an understanding of what the Aboriginal campaign is all about by talking to members of unions at workshops, Executive meetings, delegates meetings, stopwork meetings and so on.

We are pleased to announce that so far we have sufficient funds to employ Tiga Bayles as our Liaison Officer for a period of six months on a part-time basis, of course, because Tiga is very actively engaged in other areas. I am also pleased to announce that one additional union has affiliated by donating a further \$1,000 this morning so that we hope to continue the employment of Tiga beyond that six months period.

The second initiative that NUCAM took was attendance of representatives of the organisation at a national conference of the National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations at Alice Springs at Easter this year.

At that conference, we pledged not only the employment of a co-ordinator but to raise \$100,000 for the purpose of assisting to facilitate a national Aboriginal conference or conference of Aboriginal representatives from all over Australia for the purpose of them discussing themselves their aims and their priorities for the campaign for land rights.

We are very pleased that since that period the Prime Minister has also committed the government to provide the necessary support for Aboriginal people to carry out their own consultations and negotiations.

We will of course continue with our efforts to raise funds to provide the financial assistance if necessary to top up anything which may come from the government.

But the correct principled policy enunciated by the Prime Minister and Gerry Hand will mean we will be able to use some of that finance that we were going to earmark for a national Aboriginal conference to continue the type of work that Tiga is carrying out and extend it far beyond, hopefully, the initial six months period.

TIGA BAYLES I think that people aware that there is a need for this sort of a commitment from the unions. Aboriginal people have worked with the support of the unions, as far as I am aware, since back in the 1930s.

In the 30s, we had support for Jack Patten, Bill Ferguson, Pearl Gibbs and Marge Tucker — these Aboriginal people who were very involved in the early struggles there for Aboriginal people. In the 70s, we had the support again with the Aboriginal Embassy from a few unions there.

Now it's 1988. We need a little bit more than what has come about in the past. We need to establish this sort of an organisation to link the union movement with the Aboriginal organisations and the Aboriginal struggle.

With this organisation there is work being carried out from week to week, it can be brought to the front of people's minds that there is a need for this sort of commitment.

And let's face it, we need the support. This is 1988 and there has been very, very little done. For example, we haven't seen any act of reconciliation between the indigenous people and the invaders in 200 years.

There's a start. We need more. The union movement can play more of a role. We need this organisation to raise the

United Nations Report

“Australia stands in violation of her international human rights obligations”

Professor Erica-Irene Daes, Chairman-Rapporteur of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, visited Australia in December last year and January this year. The following material is taken from a long, confidential report Professor Daes submitted after her visit.

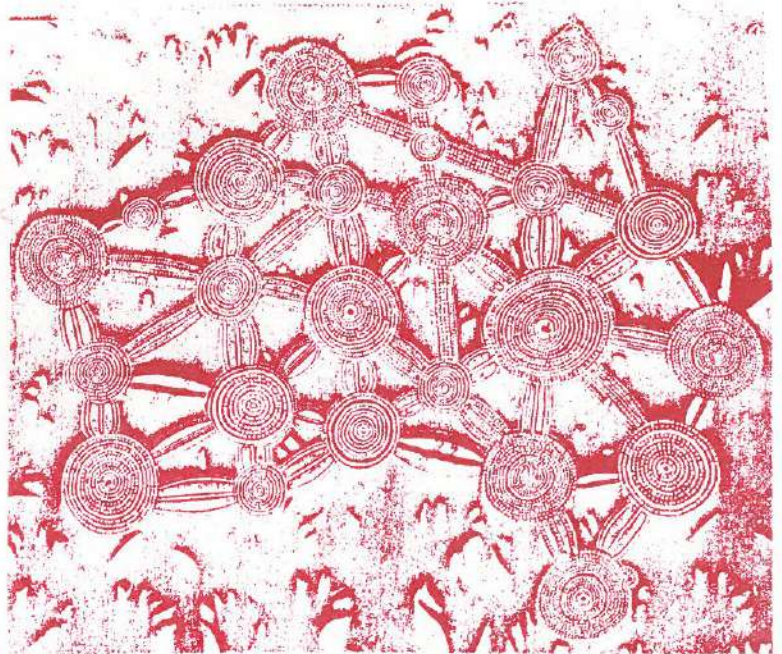
All Australians without any discrimination should have the right and the corresponding responsibility to live peacefully and creatively in a free, prosperous, harmonious and united society in order to build a better present and safe future for themselves and the succeeding generations....

The basic purpose of my visit ... was the review the human rights situation of the Aborigines and the Torres Strait Islanders and to identify issues which need to be addressed by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in its ongoing preparation of a draft declaration on international indigenous rights....

Australia is a rich and beautiful continent. The people are friendly and outgoing. It is therefore disturbing, to say the least, to find the original inhabitants of this large and plentiful continent living in poverty, misery and extreme frustration. These pockets of underdevelopment within a wealthy society inevitably come as a surprise, notwithstanding internationally available reports by both Australians and foreign visitors to the same effect.

On my visits to Aboriginal Territory and to the Torres Strait Islanders, I found situations which, when compared with the general non-indigenous living standards in the same areas, cannot but lead to the conclusion that Australia stands in violation of her international human rights obligations relating to non-discrimination and unequal treatment in general and to the provision of certain minimum services in particular.

The problems are wide-ranging and involve, inter alia, Aboriginal and Islander self-government, their participation in national and State governments, land and natural resources, preservation of identity and existence, traditional ways of life, culture, languages, education, health, housing, the position of women, children's rights, and administration of justice. All of these problems bring up



important and, I must say, very difficult human rights questions which touch upon both non-discrimination and special, positive rights essential for the equality and equal opportunities for all the peoples involved....

The real problem is and will obviously remain for a long time the “Land Rights”.

In the words of Mr Lanley, an elder of the Aboriginal people: ***“At the heart of everything is the land. It is the way we feel and think about the land that makes us Aboriginal. It is the only way to keep our culture. We belong to the land in the tribal sense, that it is part of us that we need to survive. If our Dreaming and our Laws and languages and our way of living die, then that will be the end of Aboriginal people. It all goes back to the land. That is why Land Rights is so important to us. We need the land to be Aboriginal in our minds.”*** These words represent the genuine picture of the complex political, legal, economic and social problem of land rights....

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Australia fails on human rights

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SOME SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

Aboriginal people are still suffering; the majority of them are still poor, unemployed, despaired and in ill-health.

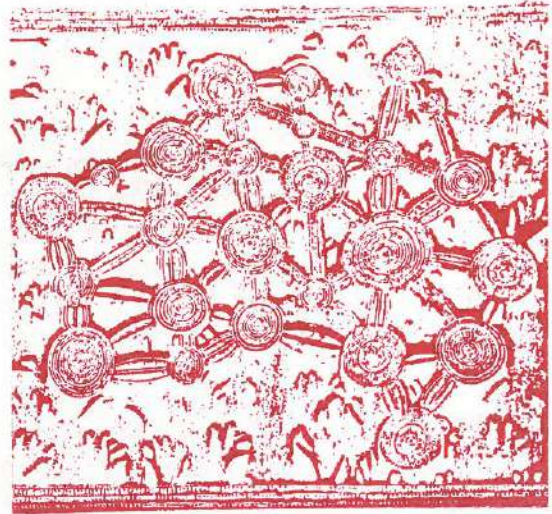
The aspirations and the way of life, their religions, traditions, Aboriginal customary laws, sites and culture identifying of the Aboriginals and Torres Strait people, should be fully protected and respected. In this connection, the author of this report is in agreement with a number of the recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission concerning the recognition of Aboriginal customary laws....

Also, the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders must be protected and supported in order to maintain their way of life, their form of self-government, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their religion or to use their own language. Special legislative and administrative measures should be adopted, when necessary, for the protection of the environment in particular in areas in which the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are living.

Nowadays, the Aboriginal people should be recognised as responsible people, able and efficient to determine their role in the communities in which they live and their own present and future welfare.

The priorities for the solution of the problems of the Aboriginal people should be determined by themselves and not by non-Aboriginal persons. Nevertheless, in cases in which the governmental competent authorities are necessarily involved, the governmental offices should be ensured that the views and consent of Aboriginal people can flow from the grassroots to the centre of government and be reflected in action, of its relevant programs and activities.

It is purposeful to reiterate that any conclusions or agreements reached between the competent authorities includ-



ing governments, Federal and State, and the Aborigines and Torres Strait people, should be based on a constructive dialogue and on an informed and free consent by the above-mentioned Aboriginal and Torres Strait people and their representatives.

The problems of the Aborigines are not only social problems which could be handled through adjustments in budgetary and administrative policies, but they are interconnected with serious complex political and legal matters which can be basically addressed through a self-government process.

To develop strategies to maximise the involvement of Aboriginal people in their own health care. However, it should be recognised that ... a great amount of money is provided in the annual budgets for Aboriginal Medical Services and the protection of Aboriginal health.

In this connection, it should be mentioned again that although the situation of the Aboriginal people in the field of health has been improved in recent years, grave health problems still exist. Therefore, because of the peculiarities of the Aboriginal health problems, a special health policy should be adopted and implemented without delays and other obstacles caused by unnecessary bureaucracy....

The higher rate at which some offences are committed needs to be viewed in the context of the socio-economic conditions under which Aboriginal people live.

Aborigines and the Torres Strait Islanders should be permitted and assisted in order to maintain contacts with other indigenous people from several parts of the world in an effort to mutually and with each other, in a network of human beings, help themselves and others to assert their human rights.

Effective legislative, administrative, including in particular educational measures, should be adopted for the eradication of the supposed superiority of one culture over another culture. Every member of a society has to start to recognise the value of diversity of people and that all of them do not have to be the same....

The progress being made is not sufficient and Australia has not yet achieved the level of United Nations standards in some particular areas affecting basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people.



The Aboriginal Movement (NUCAM)

on with the Aboriginal Movement (NUCAM) was launched in Sydney initiated by the National Coalition of Aboriginal Workers' Industrial Union. Below we reproduce the speech by Stan Sharkey from the Building Workers' Industrial Union Chairman Tiga Bayles and Federal Minister for

awareness and to raise the understanding of the Aboriginal people and our land rights movement, our fight for the recognition of land rights.

I'm going to be very busy trying to facilitate this improvement, this increase in the awareness of people within the union movement and people within the general community.

I'll leave it at that. There is a need for it and it's good to see the commitment taking place now. It is 1988 and there are big celebrations taking place and Aboriginal people have got not to be swept under the carpet or forgotten about. This is an opportunity now for people to become more actively involved.

It is not only awareness that needs to be raised, we need funding. We need the sort of organisation that will be independent of the government, with no ties to the government, an independent body. I believe NUCAM can help establish this economic independence.

We need to be able to draw up our own agenda and operate to that agenda as opposed to having to operate to government-set agendas or bureaucracies, to politicians setting agendas for us. I think NUCAM can help in this.

There's a hell of a lot of work. It's a long-term project, it can't be achieved in 1988, and we need as much support and assistance as possible. Thank you all for coming along.

STAN SHARKEY One of the media asked me if those unions associated with NUCAM are going to take industrial action if the government doesn't come forward with a treaty.

Well, let me say that what is required to ensure that the wrongs are corrected is much more complex than organising a strike. What is needed is a campaign of awareness within the community to explain, as I said earlier, the link between Aboriginal land rights demands and Aboriginal culture.

We need to do much more to answer the racism, the crude racism, that is still this day being projected by the Cope-lands and others of this world and there is going to be a long and complex political struggle necessary if we are going to succeed.

I now want to introduce the next speaker who in my opinion is the first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in my lifetime in Australia who has some understanding of what it's all about.

GERRY HAND Thank you, Stan and ladies and gentlemen.

Well, let me first of all start off by congratulating the union movement and the Aboriginal community on the coming together with this announcement of their organisation here today.

This is one of many such organisations that will be required if we are to succeed in what is obviously an aim and a goal that everyone in this room has.

Churches have formed similar organisations, community groups and so on and this is yet another example of, I think, the change that is sweeping Australia to achieve a recognition and a greater degree of understanding about what needs to be done to rectify the wrongs of the last 200 years.

Now some time back we were asked what we were going to do during 1988 and what we thought 1988 would achieve. I've maintained one view on that — that '88 has one thing that I think we ought to be striving for and that is a greater level of understanding between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people.

Once we achieve the greater understanding, the sorts of things that Tiga touched on and the Aboriginal communities have been asking for through their various organisations will be much easier for us to achieve. This organisation here will play a part in developing that understanding.

There are a number of things I just wanted to briefly explain about what the government is attempting to do in this current exercise.

Firstly, you will recall that the churches in February made an announcement that there ought to be a resolution passed by the Parliament. Now most people would think it is not as far as perhaps most of the churches would want to go and it is certainly not as far as perhaps most people in the Aboriginal community would want to go.

The Opposition seized hold of this resolution, overnight it became their resolution and within 24 hours of course they got rolled in the Shadow Cabinet and it suddenly was back with the churches or the Aboriginal people as their resolution.

That was the first walking away, if you like, by these opponents of what we are trying to achieve.

The second area is the legislation to, for the first time, try and bring about a greater level of authority and say in the way in which Aboriginal people are involved in the decision-making process and that's the establishment of our new Aboriginal Affairs and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

Now that commission will for the first time change the whole decision-making process, turn it on its head. That holds terrible fears for the Opposition as well so they're opposed to that.

Then last year the Prime Minister and myself were in Alice Springs and on Aboriginal radio he announced the government's desire to have what was termed then a treaty, a compact, a makarrata or whatever it is that people determine it ought to be called. And again an outcry from those forces that both Stan and Tiga referred to.

Now the fact of the matter is that those forces are now, I believe, very much in the minority. They are in the minority and anybody that's been involved in any campaigns and your starting off point is 43 to 45 per cent of support, well I think you're in pretty good shape.

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NUCAM launched

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The reason why some people in the community have expressed some concerns or fears about what the outcome of this whole discussion may be is because we have not yet begun to explain what it is that the whole thing is about.

And that's where organisations like this body here today become very, very important. There's nothing like grass roots developed organisations which have the capacity to go into the factories, into the shop floors of various organisations, office blocks and so on, into community organisations and have people who know what its about explaining what the situation really is.

And that's why this organisation will help, I think, overcome those fears or concerns that people have at this point of time.



There is no question in my mind or the Prime Minister's mind that we will succeed in our attempts to achieve our goal and that goal has to be understood, I think, in terms of how we get there.

The first point is — and I say this for the benefit of the media and everybody else — that the first area of discussion must be amongst Aboriginal people. They are the people who have to decide the form and the details or the issues that need to be addressed in this discussion.

For too long governments, politicians, all sorts of people have been saying to Aboriginal people 'This is what we think is best for you'. And if you've been involved in Aboriginal affairs, you would have heard that hundreds and hundreds of time.

'What do you think?' is asked, a view is given, and then somebody goes away and makes a decision and comes back and says 'well, we have decided what we think is best for you'.

Well, that's all changed now, so the discussion is going to commence with the Aboriginal people right round the country and they have the mechanisms to do that. They have the networks and they have the expertise and they know how to achieve the proper discussion right across the country, not isolated in one small pocket but right across the country. And that's the message we've been taking to them in the last six months.

At the same time organisations like the one today and church groups and other groups are saying to the government well, we'd like to help, and we welcome that support because our job is to go out into the non-Aboriginal and Islander community and talk to them about what's been occurring over the last 200 years.

And really, if you think about it, Aboriginal people really have only had equality on paper in terms of the law for 20 odd years, 21 years. So when you talk about 200 years, its really only about 20 that they've even been considered in

terms of some of the laws of this country as being equal.

Now that's an appalling situation but one which isn't really, I guess, understood by the mainstream community, about the plight of Aboriginal people and the difficulties they've had and the lack of equality of opportunity that's been available to Aboriginal people.

So our job is to go out among the non-Aboriginal community and to stress these issues and that will be a task for government and it will be a task for unions, churches, community organisations, individuals.

Why we are extremely confident about this is because we have seen something like a 100 per cent increase in the correspondence coming in to us and 95 to 98 per cent, I guess, of that correspondence is in total support of what the government is trying to achieve and what Aboriginal people are trying to achieve which is more important.

And that support mainly deals with people wanting to help and become involved. Now that's a tremendous change in these recent months, perhaps the last 12 months.

So I take this opportunity on behalf of the government to offer my congratulations to the Aboriginal community and to the union movement on coming together and setting themselves this goal to achieve these requests, demands if you like, that Aboriginal people have been asking for for a long, long time now.

And we don't have to necessarily sit around and develop how much guilt we personally must have but we have got to understand what has been happening in this country over the last 200 years and when we gain that understanding across the board these things, as I said earlier, will become much easier to achieve.

They will be achieved, there is going to be an agreement, a treaty between Aboriginal people and the Australian community, that is the approach that we are taking.



I say this to John Howard and to my Shadow Minister ... er, er, ... Miles — it sometimes takes a bit of trouble remembering who he is — well, the point about it is that they continue the path that they are, they are on a rocky road and they will end on the rocks because they've commenced their arguments, they've commenced their debate on lies and distortions from the very first press release they put out and that is not a very good position to be in when you're in a public debate.

Now what we have to do is push these people aside, have a rational discussion within the community and I have no doubt that the sort of forces that are lining up right across the community, that those forces that support this concept are going to be successful.

So I wish everybody involved in today's launch 100 per cent support and all the success in the world and I know that together, Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people working together, we are going to achieve our goals.

Report from Framlingham

The National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations has embraced the Barunga Statement (see July issue of *TUCAR Newsletter* for details) as one direction for the future of Aboriginal people in Australia.

But the Coalition has called for the beginnings of a thorough process of community consultation before any discussion of the need for a Treaty can begin.

At a meeting at the Kirrae Whirring Community at Framlingham (near Warrnambool 270 km south-west of Melbourne), the Coalition approved a series of meetings with Aboriginal communities, land-owners, organisations and councils to discuss all and any directions for the future. The Aboriginal Development Commission at its latest meeting in Canberra pledged \$500,000 to help the consultation process succeed.

The meeting also proposed for discussion the possible formalisation of the Coalition as an incorporated body and the creation of State, Territory and national secretariats to make sure all relevant information gets out to, and back from, all Aboriginal communities and organisations in Australia.

Another significant breakthrough at the meeting was discussion with Mr Justice Muirhead and the three newly appointed commissioners to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody — Johnston, Wootton and Wyvill — on the formation of an Aboriginal advisory body at local, regional and national levels to the Commission.

The meeting, attended by about 70 representatives of local, regional and national organisations and communities, has fully endorsed the concept of a process of further community consultation to decide whether a Treaty is necessary.

The endorsement follows the acceptance of the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, at Barunga, of the need to assist and wait upon the Aboriginal people's refinement of the process of consultation. The Coalition members, however, want consultation on all matters affecting the future of Aboriginal people in Australia before there is further progress on the Treaty.

They have accepted in principle part III of the Barunga Statement which calls for full community consultation. And they have looked at ways to define how this will happen. Many members saw the creation of a fully-funded secretariat at State and national level, with perhaps three or four paid positions, would go a long way to ensuring that land-owners, communities and organisations received adequate information on which they could base their decisions.

The secretariat could also make sure that feedback from Aboriginal people was then understood by any body appointed to negotiate with the Federal Government to set up the process of community consultation over the possibilities for a Treaty between Aboriginal people and the Federal Government.

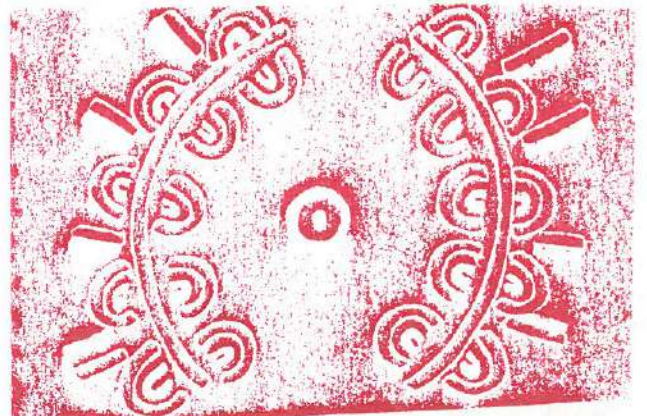
This does not mean that this body would sign or agree to anything on behalf of Aboriginal people.

The process after consultation with all Aboriginal people is hoped to eventuate in a national convention to follow through the consensus of Aboriginal people.

The Coalition has also proposed widening its membership to make sure that all Aboriginal people and their organisations have a real voice in any decisions affecting our future. The secretariat, as proposed, will not be a policy-making body. It will act solely on the direction of Coalition meetings as they are called.

Clearly, there is much to be discussed before Aboriginal people decide whether a Treaty is the most appropriate avenue of recognition of indigenous rights in Australia. But, as the Convenor of the National Federation of Land Councils, Pat Dodson, pointed out, the process of community consultation is the principle which must be upheld at all stages of any discussions about the future.

"The Coalition is an accepted forum for discussion and is recognised as such by the government and other bodies," he said. "But it cannot work if it does not represent the voice of the people and our communities and organisations."



"This meeting has at least given broad acceptance of the processes, and it has underlined the importance of the community voice. Whether we have a Treaty or not, and whether we have some other form of public and legal recognition depends on what the people want, but this is a structure which has been put forward as to how we may proceed."

Broadly, the discussion on the proposed secretariat, which is to be reported to Aboriginal communities and organisations before the next Coalition meeting, outlines a community-based structure. The secretariat will be responsible to the people it serves. It will disseminate the information out and take in information from the community level which is then to be passed on to any negotiating body authorised through the Coalition by the broad Aboriginal movement. In this way, no community's right to decide its own future will be infringed.

How the process works in principle depends on what communities and organisations report as their view at the next meeting of the Coalition.

But it is certain to underline the principle of consensus decision-making, which will ensure that the issues are decided by people at the grass roots level, rather than by any appointed body.

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BUILDING BRIDGES

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Building Bridges is a non-profit community-based association that is currently in the process of incorporation.

The aims and objectives of the **Building Bridges** association are:

★ to provide a forum for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to work together in support of the National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations (NCAO).

★ to provide educational opportunities to the broader Australian community by way of making positive statements in support of the NCAO through the staging of contemporary cultural events.

★ to provide philosophical and financial support to the NCAO through the creation and sale of contemporary cultural products.

★ to provide direct financial support to the NCAO.

Building Bridges was initiated in late 1987 due to the need for an organisation that could provide the opportunity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to work together and advocate the rights of Aboriginal people during the 1988 Bicentenary.

On January 24, 1988, the campaign was launched with the staging of **Building Bridges — The Concert** at the Bondi Pavilion in Sydney. The event attracted over 3,000 people and was an extraordinary success with the profits raised (\$5,280) donated to NCAO.

The concert, which received little local media attention, featured a variety of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal performers and speakers.

Compered by the Aboriginal activist Gary Foley and Midnight Oil singer Peter Garrett, the afternoon's entertainment featured sets by Yothu Yindi, the Swamp Jockeys, Bobby McLeod, Black Lace and Brown Sugar.

Among the speakers were the Aboriginal poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Northern Land Council Chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu, former Federal Minister James McClelland and Aboriginal story teller Maureen Watson. Film-maker David Bradbury documented the event. His footage is currently being edited, hopefully for commercial release later this year.

The next major project being initiated by **Building Bridges** is the release of a compilation album featuring a range of rock artists who are supportive of the Aboriginal cause and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together for a just future.

The preparation and release of a supporting single is also planned. It is envisaged that the single will feature Aboriginal musicians working with a number of prominent non-Aboriginal musicians. The idea is to place the contributing musicians into a studio for a week of recording and filming. The concept may not be new, but we believe that as a gesture of solidarity and an example of the possibilities of such people working together, it will be a success.

Building Bridges, a non-profit organisation, is undertaking all projects in association with the Bicentennial Protest Group with all proceeds going to the National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations.

Report from Framlingham

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Mr Dodson said the weekend meeting has proved to be another significant step forward. "We have more people and more organisations coming forward and recognising that they are part of the Coalition, that the Coalition can only work if views are fully canvassed in all possible forums before they get to the level of a Coalition meeting, and hence are raised with the government," he said. "This is a very positive step."

Coalition members also met the Royal Commissioners who had travelled to Framlingham in a bid to gain greater Aboriginal involvement in the direction the Royal Commission is to take in the future.

While Mr Justice Muirhead made it very clear that the chances of a further widening of the Commissioners' Letters Patent is unlikely, he did endorse the concept of wider Aboriginal involvement in the working of the Royal Commission.

"We need help to get outside the courtroom," Justice Muirhead said. "We want to listen to Aboriginal peoples' perception of what is wrong. We have been seen to be viewing and investigating Aboriginal people when perhaps we should investigate white society more. We want help from Aboriginal people in broadening our research; we want the Aboriginal viewpoint and we want Aboriginal involvement."

Justice Muirhead said the Royal Commission had a brief look at the social, cultural and economic factors in the incidence of deaths in custody, so it had the power to look at an historical perspective. This, he said, was why it needed to approach the Coalition to find out who to talk to.

Spokesman for the meeting workshop on deaths in custody, Terry O'shane, said the Royal Commission needed to look at recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty as a prerequisite for any change in the position of Aboriginal people in the justice system. Aboriginal people, he said, had been denied their rights to their culture. "The Royal Commission needs to look at our whole cultural, social and political burden, at the way the police and the system oppress us. And that means we just have to be involved at all levels in what the Commission is doing."

The meeting endorsed a recommendation that local, regional and national advisory bodies should advise the National Aboriginal and Islander Legal Service (NAILS) and the Committee to Defend Black Rights (CDBR) on their approaches to the Royal Commission. They are not considered the sole avenue of access to the Royal Commission, so whoever has a view to present should do so directly to the Commission.

TUCAR thanks **Land Rights News** which originally published this report.

Below I have copied pages 4 and 8 of this newsletter together so the middle paragraph can be read (although both pages also appear above in numerical order).

National Unions Coalition with the Aboriginal Movement (NUCAM)



The National Trade Union Coalition with the Aboriginal Movement (NUCAM) was launched earlier this year at a meeting in Sydney initiated by the National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations and the Building Workers' Industrial Union. Below we reproduce the speeches made on that occasion by Stan Sharkey from the Building Workers' Industrial Union, NSW Aboriginal Land Council Chairman Tiga Bayles and Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gerry Hand.

STAN SHARKEY I am the Convenor of the National Trade Union Coalition with the Aboriginal Movement — that is an organisation of, as the name implies, trade unions which was formed earlier this year for the purpose of assisting in the campaign to right the wrongs of 200 years of alienation of Aboriginal rights and Aboriginal culture.

We welcome you this morning to the launch of the campaign of NUCAM. NUCAM was formed immediately following the principled position adopted by Gerry Hand refusing to take part in official ceremonies to celebrate the bicentenary and indicating that his efforts would be concentrating on correcting the wrongs.

The trade union movement, like all other sections of the community — that is the European-Australian community — have a lot to answer for even if it is only because of adopting a complacent stance during 200 years of not only occupation but also of cruel discrimination against the Aboriginal people, efforts to destroy their culture and, as is known, if you destroy a people's culture, you destroy that people.

Those who organised NUCAM did so on the basis of assisting to develop a campaign within the community, within the trade union movement initially, to raise the consciousness of people as to what is involved in the campaign for Aboriginal land rights and restoration of dignity and equality to the Aboriginal people.

The first project that NUCAM launched was a campaign for funds within the trade union movement, within those 15 unions which are affiliated, for the purpose of employing a co-ordinator, a liaison officer, to assist to develop an understanding of what the Aboriginal campaign is all about by talking to members of unions at workshops, Executive meetings, delegates meetings, stopwork meetings and so on.

We are pleased to announce that so far we have sufficient funds to employ Tiga Bayles as our Liaison Officer for a period of six months on a part-time basis, of course, because Tiga is very actively engaged in other areas. I am also pleased to announce that one additional union has affiliated by donating a further \$1,000 this morning so that we hope to continue the employment of Tiga beyond that six months period.

The second initiative that NUCAM took was attendance of representatives of the organisation at a national conference of the National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations at Alice Springs at Easter this year.

At that conference, we pledged not only the employment of a co-ordinator but to raise \$100,000 for the purpose of assisting to facilitate a national Aboriginal conference or conference of Aboriginal representatives from all over Australia for the purpose of them discussing themselves their aims and their priorities for the campaign for land rights.

We are very pleased that since that period the Prime Minister has also committed the government to provide the necessary support for Aboriginal people to carry out their own consultations and negotiations.

We will of course continue with our efforts to raise funds to provide the financial assistance if necessary to top up anything which may come from the government.

But the correct principled policy enunciated by the Prime Minister and Gerry Hand will mean we will be able to use some of that finance that we were going to earmark for a national Aboriginal conference to continue the type of work that Tiga is carrying out and extend it far beyond, hopefully, the initial six months period.

TIGA BAYLES I think that people aware that there is a need for this sort of a commitment from the unions. Aboriginal people have worked with the support of the unions, as far as I am aware, since back in the 1930s.

In the 30s, we had support for Jack Patten, Bill Ferguson, Pearl Gibbs and Marge Tucker — these Aboriginal people who were very involved in the early struggles there for Aboriginal people. In the 70s, we had the support again with the Aboriginal Embassy from a few unions there.

Now it's 1988. We need a little bit more than what has come about in the past. We need to establish this sort of an organisation to link the union movement with the Aboriginal organisations and the Aboriginal struggle.

With this organisation there is work being carried out from week to week, it can be brought to the front of people's minds that there is a need for this sort of commitment.

And let's face it, we need the support. This is 1988 and there has been very, very little done. For example, we haven't seen any act of reconciliation between the indigenous people and the invaders in 200 years.

There's a start. We need more. The union movement can play more of a role. We need this organisation to raise the

awareness and to raise the understanding of the Aboriginal people and our land rights movement, our fight for the recognition of land rights.

I'm going to be very busy trying to facilitate this improvement, this increase in the awareness of people within the union movement and people within the general community.

I'll leave it at that. There is a need for it and it's good to see the commitment taking place now. It is 1988 and there are big celebrations taking place and Aboriginal people have got not to be swept under the carpet or forgotten about. This is an opportunity now for people to become more actively involved.

It is not only awareness that needs to be raised, we need funding. We need the sort of organisation that will be independent of the government, with no ties to the government, an independent body. I believe NUCAM can help establish this economic independence.

We need to be able to draw up our own agenda and operate to that agenda as opposed to having to operate to government-set agendas or bureaucracies, to politicians setting agendas for us. I think NUCAM can help in this.

There's a hell of a lot of work. It's a long-term project, it can't be achieved in 1988, and we need as much support and assistance as possible. Thank you all for coming along.

STAN SHARKEY One of the media asked me if those unions associated with NUCAM are going to take industrial action if the government doesn't come forward with a treaty.

Well, let me say that what is required to ensure that the wrongs are corrected is much more complex than organising a strike. What is needed is a campaign of awareness within the community to explain, as I said earlier, the link between Aboriginal land rights demands and Aboriginal culture.

We need to do much more to answer the racism, the crude racism, that is still this day being projected by the Cope-lands and others of this world and there is going to be a long and complex political struggle necessary if we are going to succeed.

I now want to introduce the next speaker who in my opinion is the first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in my lifetime in Australia who has some understanding of what it's all about.

GERRY HAND Thank you, Stan and ladies and gentlemen.

Well, let me first of all start off by congratulating the union movement and the Aboriginal community on the coming together with this announcement of their organisation here today.

This is one of many such organisations that will be required if we are to succeed in what is obviously an aim and a goal that everyone in this room has.

Churches have formed similar organisations, community groups and so on and this is yet another example of, I think, the change that is sweeping Australia to achieve a recognition and a greater degree of understanding about what needs to be done to rectify the wrongs of the last 200 years.

Now some time back we were asked what we were going to do during 1988 and what we thought 1988 would achieve. I've maintained one view on that — that '88 has one thing that I think we ought to be striving for and that is a greater level of understanding between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people.

Once we achieve the greater understanding, the sorts of things that Tiga touched on and the Aboriginal communities have been asking for through their various organisations will be much easier for us to achieve. This organisation here will play a part in developing that understanding.

There are a number of things I just wanted to briefly explain about what the government is attempting to do in this current exercise.

Firstly, you will recall that the churches in February made an announcement that there ought to be a resolution passed by the Parliament. Now most people would think it is not as far as perhaps most of the churches would want to go and it is certainly not as far as perhaps most people in the Aboriginal community would want to go.

The Opposition seized hold of this resolution, overnight it became their resolution and within 24 hours of course they got rolled in the Shadow Cabinet and it suddenly was back with the churches or the Aboriginal people as their resolution.

That was the first walking away, if you like, by these opponents of what we are trying to achieve.

The second area is the legislation to, for the first time, try and bring about a greater level of authority and say in the way in which Aboriginal people are involved in the decision-making process and that's the establishment of our new Aboriginal Affairs and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

Now that commission will for the first time change the whole decision-making process, turn it on its head. That holds terrible fears for the Opposition as well so they're opposed to that.

Then last year the Prime Minister and myself were in Alice Springs and on Aboriginal radio he announced the government's desire to have what was termed then a treaty, a compact, a makarrata or whatever it is that people determine it ought to be called. And again an outcry from those forces that both Stan and Tiga referred to.

Now the fact of the matter is that those forces are now, I believe, very much in the minority. They are in the minority and anybody that's been involved in any campaigns and your starting off point is 43 to 45 per cent of support, well I think you're in pretty good shape.

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