

National Aboriginal Conference Secretariat

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P.O. Box 259, Woden, ACT 2606

Telephone: Secretary General: 89 6035 General enquiries: 89 6033

In reply please quote: 79/77 III

The Principal,
The Australian Institute of Aboriginal
Studies,
Acton
ACT 2601

October 14, 1980

Dear Sir,

Your comments are sought on the following basic introduction to the Makarrata. It is intended to be distributed amongst Aboriginal people who are not already familiar with the Makarrata.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

David Hopkins

David Hopkins for

Executive Officer

For many years people have been saying that the Australian Government should have an agreement with the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

This Agreement would mean that;

- (1) the Government agrees that Aboriginal people owned Australia before Europeans arrived;
- (2) that the Government would recognise the needs of Aboriginal people.

Europeans call an agreement like this a 'Treaty'.

The National Aboriginal Conference talked about the word Treaty and decided the Treaty should have an Aboriginal name. They, the National Aboriginal Conference, decided upon the word 'Makarrata'.

Makarrata is a Northern Territory Yolnu word which means 'things are okay again after a fight'.

The National Aboriginal Conference has set up a special committee called the Makarrata Sub-Committee to ask Aboriginal people what they would like to see in a Makarrata. The committee consists of; Cedric Jacobs, of Western Australia, Peter Minyipirriwuy, of the Northern Territory, Lyall Munro, of New South Wales, Nessie Skuta, of Victoria and Bill Bird, of New South Wales.

These people want to know what YOU think about a Makarrata and would like you to talk with your friends and community about a Makarrata.

There are a lot of things which could go into a Makarrata such as;

- * land rights in each State
- * cash compensation for loss of land to be administered by an elected Aboriginal organisation
- * fishing and hunting rights
- * protection of Aboriginal sacred sites
- * promotion of Aboriginal languages, law and culture
- * abolition of laws which discriminate against Aboriginal people
- * end of harsh police practices
- * employment for Aboriginal people
- * reservation of several seats for Aboriginals in Commonwealth State and Local Governments
- * recognition of National Aborigines Day as a public holiday

- * honouring of Aboriginal heroes
- * return of Aboriginal skeletons and artifacts from Government Museums in Australia and overseas, to their Aboriginal owners

If you talk about it in your community you might get more ideas. It is up to the Aboriginal people all over Australia to decide what they want in a Makarrata.

When the Makarrata Sub-Committee has talked to the Aboriginal people and all the ideas have been put together, they will then go to Canberra and talk to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Prime Minister. These Ministers have given the National Aboriginal Conference the go-ahead to prepare a proposal for a Makarrata. The National Aboriginal Conference would hope that the Ministers will listen to what the Committee has to say about a Makarrata.

The National Aboriginal Conference will only know what you want in a Makarrata if you tell them, so please tell your National Aboriginal Conference member what you think should be in a Makarrata.

If you cannot get in touch with your National Aboriginal Conference member you should write to the, National Aboriginal Conference Secretariat, P.O. Box 259, Woden, A.C.T., 2606 or telephone Canberra (062) 896036.

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