

National Aboriginal Conference



Sub-committee
on the . . .



MAKARRATA

MAKARRATA REPORT

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Mr J. P. Hagan — Chairman
Ms Lois O'Donoghue
Mr Lyall Munro
Mr Cedric Jacobs
Mr Peter Minyipirriwuy

STAFF MEMBERS:

Pauline Brown — Stenographer
Theresa Colosimo — Travel Clerk/Recorder

The National Aboriginal Conference agreed that the Committee should travel to each State and Territory and the Torres Strait Islands to give the Aboriginal people the opportunity to tell the Committee what they think should be the contents of any agreement between the Aboriginal people of this country and the Australian Government. This followed a resolution from the Second National Conference in April, 1979, which read:

"That we as representatives of the Aboriginal Nation (N.A.C.) request that a Treaty of Commitment be executed between the Aboriginal nation and the Australian Government. The N.A.C. request as Representatives of the Aboriginal people that the Treaty should be negotiated by the N.A.C. Accordingly resolved that we immediately convey our moral, legal and traditional rights to the Australian Government and that we immediately proceed to carry from our people the suggested areas to which the Treaty should be relevant and that we proceed also to draft a Treaty and copies of this Motion be sent to the Prime Minister and to all Members of the Australian Parliament."

The Prime Minister has stated that he is now ready to talk to Aboriginals about an Agreement, but he will only talk with the National Aboriginal Conference, because we are the elected representatives of the Aboriginal people.

The Committee has now concluded its journey of investigation around Australia, and the fol-



lowing is a faithful expression of the expectations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people:

The MAKARRATA recognises —

That the Aboriginal people were the prior owners of the Australian continent, and the Aboriginal people enter this agreement and negotiate with the Australian Government as an equal party. The Makarrata seeks compensation for the losses of the Aboriginal people. The compensation is sought in kind and in cash. The losses are primarily of land and culture.

The MAKARRATA seeks —

For the loss of CULTURE:

IN KIND: That the teaching of Aboriginal culture in Australian schools be compulsory, with the proviso that there are certain traditional and ceremonial aspects which cannot be taught.

The MAKARRATA seeks —

COMPENSATION IN KIND:

Being the return of specific lands, those lands being:

- (a) Aboriginal sacred sites;
- (b) Existing land occupied by the tribal people;
- (c) Freehold title of all that land upon which Aboriginal people presently live, including inviolate rights to the fishing and hunting associated with such lands.

The MAKARRATA seeks —

COMPENSATION IN CASH:

To recover our losses which are not recoverable in kind, paid at the annual rate of 1-1½ per cent of the Gross National Product, or at that percentage represented by the Aboriginal population of Australia, whichever percentage is the greater.

The compensation in cash shall be used for the improvement of housing, education, health, employment opportunities, and in any other areas of concern to the Aboriginal people.

STATUS FOR THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE:

One of the items coming through clearly is the search for dignity and quality of life. It is acknowledged that dignity cannot be restored by the abolition of restrictive and paternalistic laws relating to the Aboriginal race. Specifically, the people want the abolition of statutes in any part of the Commonwealth that make Aboriginal status different in any way from that of other citizens. This also applies to harsh police practices. Status is acquired for the Aboriginal people by the management of their own affairs. In particular, the cash payments referred to above would be administered by the Aboriginal people themselves.

The MAKARRATA seeks:

That the tribal lands and their sacred sites are totally non-negotiable, and will remain such permanently, and that the tribal laws shall likewise remain.

The MAKARRATA seeks:

REPRESENTATION

The reservation of several seats in the Commonwealth, State and local governments.

The MAKARRATA seeks:

The recognition of National Aborigines Day as a public holiday, the identification of places of significant Aboriginal happenings or struggles, and the honouring of Aboriginal heroes.

The MAKARRATA seeks:

The compulsory employment in government and quasi-government agencies of a fixed proportion of Aboriginal people, irrespective of their established skills.

The MAKARRATA seeks:

The immediate return of Aboriginal skeletons and artifacts from governmental museums to enable Aboriginal people to have full control of them.

"MAKARRATA" is a coming together after a struggle. Above all, the MAKARRATA seeks the happiness, the unity and the well being of all Australian people.

THE MAKARRATA COMMITTEE welcomes your comments.

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National Aboriginal Conference Documents

AIATSIS Library, P NAT

“NAC Subcommittee on the Makarrata” information pamphlet.

NAC Makarrata Subcommittee

(m0023749_a.pdf)

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