

National Aboriginal Conference Secretariat



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In reply please quote:

8 July, 1980

To All Aboriginal Organizations

I am writing to seek your comments on the proposals to negotiate a Makarrata.

The National Aboriginal Conference in its Second National Meeting in April 1979 passed the following resolution:

"That we as representatives of the Aboriginal National (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 now stated that he is ready to talk about an Agreement with the National Aboriginal Conference as the elected representatives of the Aboriginal people.

The N.A.C. believes that this matter is so important that it must be undertaken carefully and thoroughly. A lot of work must be done to ensure that all Aboriginal people throughout Australia understand the idea of the Makarrata, and then decide what form it should take.

The N.A.C. has formed a Sub-Committee to consult with Aboriginal people throughout Australia about the Makarrata. The people on this committee are Jim Hagan, of Queensland, Chairman; Lois O'Donoghue, of South Australia; Peter Minyipirruwuy, of the Northern Territory; Lyall Munro, of New South Wales; and Cedric Jacobs, of Western Australia.

This Sub-Committee has made two journeys of investigation around Australia, seeking Aboriginal views on the Makarrata.

The first trip was to Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria. In Queensland it visited Brisbane, Townsville, Charleville, Cunnamulla, Mt Isa, Palm Island, Thursday Island and Cairns. In New South Wales it visited Coffs Harbour, Moree, Brewarrina and Sydney. In Tasmania all Aboriginal organisations met the Committee in Launceston and in Victoria the Meetings was held in Melbourne and Mildura.

Its second trip took in Perth, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Warburton, Leonora, Pt Hedland, Strelly Station and Kununnurra before going on to the Northern Territory where it visited Bagot Reserve, Elcho Island, Katherine, a place called Rock Hole, Wattie Creek and Alice Springs. From Alice Springs it flew to Adelaide and then on to Port Augusta where the trip ended.

Following these trips we have prepared a small booklet which gives an outline of the Aboriginal opinions so far expressed to the Committee.

I am enclosing 5 copies of this booklet for your organization. More copies can be obtained through your local N.A.C. member.

In addition to those matters outlined in the booklet, many other local issues have been discussed at each of the meetings the Sub-Committee has attended.

In some areas many local meetings have already been held to discuss the Makarrata. In other localities, however, the Sub-Committee found many people unfamiliar with the whole idea of a Treaty.

Most places we have visited told us they would now need more time to consider the Makarrata, to talk among themselves and asked that we return for more talks at a later date.

There was some concern with the name Makarrata and some meetings suggested we should stick with the word Treaty because they felt that the name Treaty had more meaning for what we are doing. However, an equal number of meetings supported a Tribal name and support was given to retain the name Makarrata.

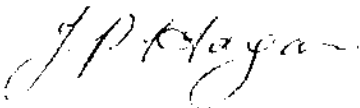
The N.A.C. is continuing to encourage discussion amongst as many Aboriginal people as possible on the whole idea of the Makarrata and on what should be included in it.

As part of this process, we would appreciate it if your Organization could examine the proposals outlined in the leaflet, and consider responding in writing to the N.A.C. with your views on the subject of the Makarrata.

It is hoped that the attached questionnaire on the Makarrata may assist you in your discussions.

Thank you for your attention to this matter which we feel to be vital to the future of our people throughout Australia.

Yours faithfully,



Jim Hagan, Chairman
NATIONAL ABORIGINAL CONFERENCE

Encl.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL CONFERENCE

Makarrata Questionnaire

10 July, 1980

Do Aboriginal people in your area understand what the word Makarrata means?

Do your people understand the idea of a Makarrata?

How do your people feel about the idea of a Makarrata?

Would you like more information about the idea of a Makarrata? What sort of information do you need?

How can we spread the word about the Makarrata in your area and how can we hear what your people say about it?

Do we need to translate information about the Makarrata into local languages? Is it better if this is on cassette tapes or written down? Can you help with this?

If Aboriginal people in your area understand the idea of a Makarrata and support it, what sort of things do they want included in the Makarrata?

If Aboriginal people in your area understand the idea of the Makarrata but do not support it, what don't they like about it?

How do Aboriginal people in your area believe that the negotiations for the Makarrata should take place?

Are your people satisfied if at the right time the National Aboriginal Conference negotiates with the Government on behalf of all Aboriginal people?

If your people are not satisfied with that way of negotiating, can you explain why? Can you suggest a way of negotiating a Makarrata that would be more satisfactory to your people?

If the N.A.C., after proper consultation with Aboriginal people throughout Australia, negotiates a Makarrata with the Australian Government, would your people need to ratify the agreement? If so, how could this be done?

Have people in your area thought about the questions of sovereignty, of prior Aboriginal ownership of Australia and of what this would mean to the Makarrata?

Do people in your area think that Aboriginal people can negotiate a just settlement with the Australian Government?

If a just settlement is negotiated how can we make sure that the Government keeps its word? How can we be sure that no change of Government will change the agreement? How can we ensure that State Government do not stand in the way of the agreement?

Do you want the N.A.C. Sub-Committee on the Makarrata to come to your area to talk about the whole idea? Would you help organise meetings to talk about the Makarrata when they come?

Can you make any suggestions which would help make their visit more successful?

Has the Sub-Committee visited your area already? Did many people hear about the visit? What did people say about the visit and about the idea of the Makarrata?

Is there land of special significance to Aboriginal people in your area which needs to be protected? What conditions should be included in the Makarrata to safeguard those lands? What would this mean for mining and tourism on those lands?

Do people in your area believe that cash compensation should be included in the Makarrata? How much money should this be? Who should administer and control this money? What should this money be used for?

Should the money be more at first to pay for big programs of housing, education, health care and employment and reducing to a lower, agreed level later when conditions have improved?

Do Aboriginal people in your area want some recognition of tribal laws to be included in the Makarrata? How can this be done?

Do your people believe that there should be special seats in Commonwealth, State and local governments reserved for Aboriginal people?

In some areas, people have suggested that National Aborigines Day be recognised as a public holiday as part of a way of honouring Aboriginal culture. What do your people think?

What do your people feel about the proposal for the immediate return of Aboriginal skeletons and artifacts from museums to enable Aboriginal people to have full control of them?

What do your people think about the idea of compelling government bodies to employ a fixed proportion of Aboriginal people, irrespective of their established skills?

Are there any other comments people in your area wish to make now about the idea of the Makarrata or about what should be included in it?

AIATSIS CENTRAL FILE

AIATSIS, 80/25

“A basic introduction to Makarrata” Form letter from the NAC to

AIATSIS, 8/7/80

(a331908_1_a.pdf)

To cite this file use :

http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/lbry/dig_prgm/treaty/nac/a331908_1_a.pdf

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