

Sovereign Union of First Nations and Peoples in Australia

Asserting Australia's First Nations Sovereignty into Governance

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Referendum Council Round 2

Here we go again. What is this - Pat Dodson Round 5 or 6? When will the Commonwealth, or Dodson's financial backers, realize that all the millions of taxpayers' dollars and donated funds have never borne any real fruit despite Dodson's efforts to make something a positive reality in the 35 years?

Dodson's continuing failure stems directly from his refusal to engage with core grassroots issues confronted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities across Australia. Clearly Dodson exhibits and exemplifies the true definition of the Stockholm Syndrome. Pat Dodson realizes that there are few in his age group who were privileged to being educated in private Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican schools. They now hunt down our young ones who are now in those same schools to bring them under their wings to carry on the opposition to the grassroots public school educated blacks. The difference is the many of the educated ones seek to assimilate, while the grassroots public school people are blackfullas doing it hard and standing their grounds for their human and inherent rights to be who they are.

John Howard and Tony Abbott promoted the belief that, if Australians don't look at the past, they can then go forward with a clear and empty consciousness (based on denial). If, First Nations people were to lose our past and our history, we have no future. This is why Australia continues to find it very hard when dealing with human rights issues in regards to First Nations inherent rights.

I notice on this Referendum Council, Dodson is teamed up with the likes of Mark Leibler, Kristina Keneally, Amanda Vanstone, Natasha Stott Despoja, Mick Gooda, and Murray Gleeson. Now let's look at the achievements of those mentioned just to name a few.

Mark Leibler, having been involved on the 'Expert Panel on the Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians' together with Dodson and Mick Gooda, all of whom agreed, that the continuation of the Aboriginal continental common law of the land that established sovereign authority of the respective First Nations across Australia was a matter too hard to handle and

that in their esteemed opinion would be too hard a sell to the Australian public. Therefore, they adopted the view that the referendum does not even go there. This is despite the matter being raised in many of the hearings that they had conducted.

Clearly Dodson is true to his stance against the right of Aboriginal Peoples to be self-determining because, it follows on from his submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs *Two Hundred Years Later* to look at a Treaty, Compact, Makarrata between the Commonwealth government representing Australians and the NAC National Aboriginal Conference representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, where Dodson on behalf of the Federation of Aboriginal Land Councils said at the Alice Springs Senate Committee hearings that the Federation of Aboriginal Land Councils does not support a Treaty nor did they support sovereignty but said land rights was the only issue. Then he and his other specialist six gave us Native Title not Land Rights. I might add that Dodson may claim as his greatest triumph on the issue of Reconciliation was to get 250 000 (sic) to walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, shake hands and say G'day. A lot of money for a stroll.

My disappointment with Mark Leibler is that he comes from an historical background that should understand oppression, subjugation and genocide, but he can work to forgive the colonials for the genocide committed and which continues to this day here in Australia.

The former NSW Premier Kristina Keneally has a hide to think that she has something to offer. If we look back at her reign as Premier of NSW she gave us 'recognition' in the NSW Constitution as the First Peoples of New South Wales, however, former Premier Keneally encumbered this 'recognition' by including in the Constitution itself an indemnity clause that indemnifies the NSW colonialists and their authorities from any wrong doing that they committed during their colonial past to the present day. So much for her piecemeal guilt ridden efforts to reconcile.

Need we say much about two more politicians Amanda Vanstone's and Natasha Stott Despoja's achievements? We should be asking what credentials they have in championing the cause of liberation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples.

Now let's take a look at Murray Gleeson, former Chief Justice of the High Court. This man failed to acknowledge the racism built into the Native Title Act that suppresses and denies natural justice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples. Gleeson cannot hide behind the veil of legalism to argue that the racist aspects of the Native Title Act were never raised in legal arguments. At least the current Chief Justice Robert French had the decency to say that the Native Title Act is wrong and unnecessarily burdensome on the claimants, for he understands the racism and called it out when he called for the Native Title Act to be revised, so that it is the colonialists who have to prove their claim of right rather than First Nations Peoples having to prove their continuing connection. Not only did Former Chief Justice Murray Gleeson fail to deliver true justice, but he was presiding over the High Court when John Howard suspended the Racial Discrimination Act to reinforce the authority of mining companies over Aboriginal rights.

As for Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, was also on the 'Expert Panel on the Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians' and he should have declined the invitation to be on the Referendum Council so that he could maintain a neutral position. His acceptance of this position compromises his objectivity as Social Justice Commissioner. Clearly Mick Gooda fails to understand the independent role that he should be playing, but I consider that his acceptance brings into question his

understanding of his position. I, like many other Aboriginal people, take exception to someone who is supposed to be protecting our Human Rights rather than promoting a government objective that not all Aboriginal people support, accept nor even understand its consequences and ramifications. There are too many unknowns, uncertainties and not even final wording for the referendum. Mick Gooda should understand that his role is also to report without bias the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander opposition to the referendum.

As I've said before, Tanya Hosch, Joint campaign director of Recognise, is trying to lead our people into a trap the majority of whom do not understand.

It is time that the members of this newly formed Referendum Council focus their attention on conducting true and meaningful discussions with the grassroots communities. There is a desperate need to have town hall meetings to hear the reasoning of the opposition's position to First Nations people being included in the Australian Constitution. Failure to do this will only see another imposition being arbitrarily imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples. Dodson and his council may argue that they don't have the financial resources to do this, but this is the only way to fully inform our people.

For us to even consider such a drastic historical change we must have true free prior information for the 'No' case as well as the 'Yes' case for the people whose lives will be affected. The Commonwealth of Australia and the Referendum Council may be able to convince non-Aboriginal Australia to accept the 'Yes' case for the referendum but they cannot expect the grassroots Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders population to automatically fall in to line, remembering also that no specific wording has been finalised yet. Get it right. Do it right.

It is only by dealing with the hard and complex issues of our situation that we can ever expect true justice to be achieved, otherwise we continue to be part of a tyrannical dictatorship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been subjected to since colonisation.

Many of the grassroots Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's objections to assimilation are centred on not becoming dependent Australians without a history, or culture or identity. We are Murrawarri, Nyoongar, Euahlayi, Woka Woka, Yorta Yorta, Wiradjuri etc. It is our inherent right to choose our own national identity, our own political and economic affiliations, and to exercise our freedoms. To be denied this is a clear violation of all Human Rights.

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BACKGROUND:

<http://nationalunitygovernment.org/content/protest-kirribilli-against-forced-assimilation-and-genocide-through-recognition>

<http://nationalunitygovernment.org/content/government-con-constitutional-recognition>

<http://nationalunitygovernment.org/content/proposed-constitutional-reforms-are-treasonous-and-fraudulent>

<http://nationalunitygovernment.org/content/indigenous-recognition-debate-deserves-better-political-jostling>

<http://nationalunitygovernment.org/content/constitutional-recognition-treaty-and-sovereign-rights>

<http://nationalunitygovernment.org/content/sovereign-treaty-only-constitutional-reform-potential-justice-aboriginal-nations-and-peoples>

PS: After the success of John Howard's Ten Point Plan of bucket loads of extinguishment of Native Title, John Anderson, former National Party Deputy Prime Minister, reaped the rewards of his endeavours by gaining major share holdings in the coal seam gas company Eastern Star in the Pilliga NSW. It was Eastern Star who caused a major disaster by contaminating a large area of their coal seam gas tenement. Then we have his replacement Mark Vale of the National Party benefitting from the Ten Point Plan by becoming the present chairperson of Whitehaven/Aston Coal, who are currently operating in the Gunnedah Basin. We cannot forget Tim Fischer, who coined the phrase 'bucket loads of extinguishment' being made the ambassador to the Vatican. It seems that white people get their just desserts on earth and do not have to wait for their rewards in heaven, as our people are preached to do by the missionaries and church edicts.

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The political reality is that Australia has *never* been independent from the mother country, whose apron strings still maintain control despite the rejoicing of Australians in 1945 when the *Westminster Adoption Act* was supposed to grant independence from Britain. I understand that the colonial Australians were embarrassed at the end of World War I when they realised that they had no authority to sign the Armistice Agreement on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918 and I dare say that it is from this embarrassment that they realised the need to become assertive so as to achieve a right of self-determination from Britain.