

INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

Organisation: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Studies
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Theme:

Summary

Friday 16th April 2004

Ms Jan Burnswoods,
Chair, Standing Committee on Social Issues,
Legislative Council, Parliament House,
Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000

Dear Ms Burnswoods,

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission relating to the Redfern/Waterloo incident earlier this year.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is a federal statutory authority located in Canberra which has more than forty years of experience and interest in the sociocultural determinants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing. We are aware of the complex relationships between the full range of interests in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other communities. Our understanding of these relationships in large urban settings such as Sydney is particularly poor.

In relation to the Redfern/Waterloo incident, we would like to recommend that a long term community relationship-building project involving all interested parties, not just police and Indigenous people involved in the incident, be established to explore the issues around the incident and to help chart a positive way forward. Such a project would need to be developed organically, using people and resources available in Redfern and building on local capacity rather than being imposed from outside. Community ownership of any processes and a commitment to relationship building is critical to success of this type of project.

AIATSIS has widespread knowledge and research experience in Australian contexts where Indigenous relationships with other sectors of the community become strained. We are currently working on an Australia-wide research consultancy for the National Law Enforcement Research Fund on policing implications of illicit drug use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's communities. We are also involved in a research program in decision-making and conflict management in relation to Native Title claims throughout Australia.

Depending on AIATSIS Council consideration and approval, we could facilitate a scoping project to identify issues and ways forward. This might involve, for example, a

recommendation of a twelve month pilot program of relationship-building using facilitators from within the community leading to a guaranteed number of salaried positions at the conclusion of the pilot program. We cannot over emphasize the fact that to be successful, the way forward must include Indigenous consent to and ownership of all processes and that there are no short-term fixes.

Should you have any further inquiries, please contact Professor Luke Taylor, Acting Deputy Principal of AIATSIS, telephone (02) 6246 1118, email: Luke.Taylor@aiatsis.gov.au

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Dodson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Mick Dodson,
Chairperson, AIATSIS