

Submission
No 30

INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

Organisation: Crossroads Aboriginal Ministry

Name: Pastor Ray Minniecon

Pastor Ray Minniecon
Crossroads Aboriginal Ministry
73 - 75 George Street
REDFERN
NSW 2016
Ph. 0417 929 701

23 January 2008

The Chairperson
NSW Legislative Council
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Inquiry Into Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous
Disadvantage

29 JAN 2008

Dear Sir or Madam,

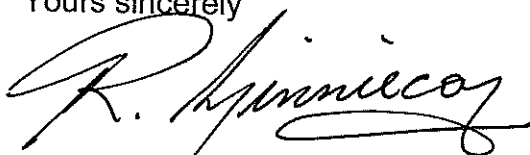
**Personal submission to the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry Into Closing the
Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage**

I would like to congratulate the Standing Committee for embarking on this very important and timely examination of the well-being of Aboriginal people and communities in regional and urban NSW.

Factors the Committee must take into account before it can gain a thorough appreciation of what must be done to effectively address disadvantage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples in NSW are set in the attached submission.

I would welcome an opportunity to expand verbally on the matters set out in this submission at a subsequent public hearing.

Yours sincerely



Pastor Ray Minniecon
Crossroads Aboriginal Ministry

SUBMISSION

to

**NSW Legislative Council
Standing Committee on Social Issues**

**Inquiry Into Closing the Gap: Overcoming Indigenous
Disadvantage**

**Pastor Ray Minniecon
Crossroads Aboriginal Ministries
Redfern
73 – 75 George St, Redfern
NSW 2016**

Ph. 0417 929 701

SUBMISSION

to

**NSW Legislative Council
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Inquiry Into Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage**

I would like to begin by congratulating the Standing Committee for embarking on this very important and timely examination of factors impacting on the well-being of Aboriginal people and communities in regional and urban NSW.

The social, material, cultural and spiritual well-being of the broader NSW community will only be enriched if the Standing Committee identifies practical solutions to the diverse factors and issues currently impacting adversely on Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islands) people in NSW.

The plight of our Stolen Generations people is perhaps just the most tangible impact of factors which have impacted adversely on Aboriginal people in NSW.

The Standing Committee needs to endorse specific initiatives and strategies which properly address the plight of these Stolen Generations people.

However, I also submit that the deeply shocking experiences of boys and girls removed to universally condemned institutions like the Kinchela Boys Home and Cootamundra Girls Home (both of which were under the control of the NSW Government through the Aboriginal Protection Board) are not all that far removed in either form, scope or outcome from the experiences of many other Aboriginal people.

The Committee therefore needs to have regard to the experience of the Stolen Generations when considering initiatives which address disadvantage among other Aboriginal people.

If it does not do this, the Committee will not have the right “moral and ethical compass” to gain accurate insight into how the economic, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal people and their communities in NSW and across Australia generally is still undermined on a daily basis.

An appreciation of the experiences of Stolen Generations people and understanding what needs to be done to begin to properly address their personal grief and loss, emotional pain, and social dislocation should also inform the Committee’s consideration of responses to overcome disadvantage in the wider Aboriginal community.

For example, for many Aboriginal people, forcible removal of their children was a routine occurrence over more than 150 (and in some case almost 200) years, and accompanied forced removal from traditional lands and deliberate undermining and erosion of associated culture and spiritual belief systems, many of which were intimately connected to land and wellbeing.

The forced removal of Aboriginal children also contributed to an absence of the development of a sense of community and family among younger people which became increasingly entrenched over successive generations. This has been associated with:

- relocation of people outside their traditional tribal lands and groups;
- loss of community and tribal social structures;
- loss of knowledge of family and cultural systems guiding local family and clan groups;
- loss of contact with good family rearing practices;
- poor social skills development;
- the end of the passing on of other cultural knowledge and practice;
- the loss of traditional economic and technical skills;
- loss of access to the natural resource base;
- less healthy diets;
- the loss of medical and health based knowledge associated with plants and traditional foods.

The cumulative legacy of the loss experienced by the overwhelming majority of Aboriginal people has NOT been offset by increased access to and acquisition of skills, and the economic and social resources necessary to enable Aboriginal people to survive and respond effectively to a foreign culture and economy.

And these adverse impacts are ongoing in NSW and elsewhere in Australia. For example, remote communities and communities in and around Alice Springs, and Darwin are being starved of funds, essential institutional support and other resources via the increasingly discredited Northern Territory Intervention policy introduced by the previous Howard federal government.

The net outcome will be exacerbation of existing levels of poverty and further undermining of the capacity of Aboriginal people to manage their own lives and communities effectively.

But these are only the more high-profile examples. The Committee should also not lose sight of the fact that an Aboriginal community in regional NSW (ie in Dubbo) was recently forcibly demolished and its residents removed to new areas.

Relocation, as anyone who has moved house knows, carries with it attendant social and personal disruption and through this, for Aboriginal people, a very high risk of social, spiritual, cultural and economic loss and dislocation.

Closing the gap by addressing cultural and spiritual loss

Any strategy which seeks to improve the economic and social wellbeing of Aboriginal must first and foremost properly underpin Aboriginal culture and spirituality and, through this, address spiritual and cultural loss.

Six broad sets of interdependent factors or "key drivers" essential to genuine, deeply-rooted, cultural and spiritual wellbeing and therefore to economic and social wellbeing among Aboriginal people are: Health; Adequate housing; Employment; Economic development; Education; and Creative endeavour. The interdependent

nature of these key drivers and their relationship to spiritual and cultural wellbeing is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key drivers of spiritual and cultural wellbeing



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The NSW Government and its agencies (including privatised, and non-government funded agencies) should be required to monitor, evaluate and assess the impact of their strategic plans and related policies and initiatives on the key drivers of Aboriginal spiritual and cultural well-being.
2. The NSW Government should adopt long-term strategic goals and strategies specific to strengthening the spiritual and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal people.
3. These goals and strategies, should be developed in conjunction with Aboriginal people and communities, and should be underpinned by concrete performance indicators, which keep government accountable and be designed to simplify access to key government services and other resources which direct on the key drivers of individual and community well-being.

or elsewhere in NSW. This is in spite of the fact that they have served in every overseas military conflict since the Boer War and were frequently denied access to RSL clubs, veterans housing and other benefits afforded to non-Aboriginal diggers.

- Statues to major Aboriginal cultural figures are also missing – again this contrasts sharply with statues erected in memory of other worthy people like Robert Burns.
- Likewise there is also no Aboriginal cultural centre in the City of Sydney LGA.
- The glaring omission of positive images of Aboriginal people (many of whom are our heroes) from the public realm is common to almost all cities and towns in NSW and elsewhere in Australia and must be addressed.

Pastor Ray Minniecon
Crossroads Aboriginal Ministries
Redfern