

## Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians



### Communiqué 16-17 February 2011

The Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians appointed by the Australian Government came to Canberra over two days for our first historic meeting.

The Panel welcomes the commitment of successive Federal Governments to constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and acknowledges the support of all major Australian political parties and independents.

The Panel is united in its view that constitutional recognition will benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and all Australians.

Members reflected on the privilege and responsibility of the role with which they have been charged. They acknowledged that their work will facilitate one of our most important national conversations.

The Panel's diverse experience makes it well placed to provide guidance and support in stimulating this conversation, and providing considered advice to government.

Co-chair Patrick Dodson spoke about the importance of the Panel's role in engaging the Australian nation to set the foundations for recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the constitution:

*"Recognition by the nation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution will advance reconciliation and contribute towards a more united Australia. It is important to open a new chapter which celebrates the richness of Australia's connected cultural history".*

Co-chair Mark Leibler welcomed the Panel: *"It's wonderful to hear from such a diverse group of Australians with wide ranging views united behind a common purpose".*

The Panel is made up of Australians from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities: people from small and large business, community leaders, academia and members of parliament across the political spectrum – from all states, city and country.

The Panel considered how best to engage all Australians and ensure a wide range of ideas are sought and heard. The conversation will continue throughout the year and the Panel encourages all Australians to be involved.

A discussion paper on constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be released for public comment as the starting point for Australia's conversation on this significant issue.

In December 2011, the Panel will report to the Australian Government on possible options for recognition and the likely degree of support they could receive from the Australian population.

For more information on Indigenous Constitutional Recognition visit [www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)

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