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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

11 March 2010

Statement from Cr Roy Ah-See re the dissolution of the Koompahtoo Local Aboriginal Land Council

The news that Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Paul Lynch has formally dissolved the Koompahtoo Local Aboriginal Land Council represents a very sad day for the Aboriginal people of the Sydney/Newcastle region, and for the broader NSW Aboriginal land council network.

While I had hoped Koompahtoo would be around for a long time to come, I don't think anybody can reasonably say that its dissolution was unexpected.

The writing has been on the wall on this matter for a long time.

With that in mind, there are people – Aboriginal and non Aboriginal – who could have ensured this day was avoided, but either failed to act, or simply acted in their own self-interest.

Some of those people have already been before the courts, and convicted. Others await their day in court. But regardless of race, as Aboriginal people we cannot stand by and watch maladministration and corruption. We cannot fail to act. We must not fail to act.

The failings such as those seen at Koompahtoo put the entire NSW land rights system in jeopardy. I for one will not watch quietly while that happens and nor should any Aboriginal person. I know the Board of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council shares that determination.

Koompahtoo should serve as a reminder not just to the people of my region, but to all Aboriginal people across the land rights network that must not fail to confront corruption.

We have faced greater challenges than the dissolution of a single land council, and we'll confront this challenge with the same passion with which we've met others.

I look forward to working with the people of my region – and beyond – to rebuild Koompahtoo from the ground up. We can recreate a once proud, active and vibrant land council and in doing so deliver on the promise that land rights brought us – a promise of an economic future for generations of Aboriginal people to come.

Media contact
Chris Graham, 0407 555 328