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The trust and respect of leadership

The New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council has welcomed the Federal Government's commitment to place local Indigenous leaders at the front and centre of efforts to close the opportunity and life expectancy gaps between Aboriginal people and their fellow Australians.

However, the NSWALC Councillor for the Sydney-Newcastle region, Roy Ah-See says there's not a lot of evidence of this happening on the ground in New South Wales.

Councillor Ah-See was responding to a media statement issued by Minister Jenny Macklin which claimed the Rudd Government has begun an intensive effort to promote Indigenous leadership as part of its commitment to "forge a new relationship, based on mutual trust and respect, with Indigenous Australians."

He says NSWALC will work with any government which seeks to genuinely promote Indigenous leadership, particularly that elected by their community.

"But there needs to be a genuine partnership forged between the Federal Government and Aboriginal leaders, elected and appointed by the community and so far we have not seen much evidence of this mutual trust and respect from the Commonwealth in NSW.

"Efforts to forge true partnerships have been, at best, piecemeal," Councillor Ah See said.

"I had to use the white man's processes to be elected to represent the constituents of the Sydney-Newcastle region," he said.

"Minister Macklin's statement appears to be all about promoting people appointed and anointed by her Government as Aboriginal leaders.

"Trust and respect with the Aboriginal community is something which is earned. It cannot be bestowed upon individuals at the whim of Ministers.

"The Minister should deal with Aboriginal leaders elected by their people...not those anointed by Government.

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