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LIBERATE AND EMPOWER ABORIGINAL
PEOPLE IN NEW SOUTH WALES THROUGH
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

June 16, 2010

FIRST AUSTRALIANS FINALLY RECOGNISED IN NSW CONSTITUTION

Statement by Bev Manton, Chairwoman of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council

It's been over a century in the making, but the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) has welcomed the Keneally Government's decision to formally recognise this state's first peoples in the preamble to the NSW Constitution.

It comes 108 years after the formation of the NSW State Parliament - the oldest in Australia.

NSWALC has, and continues to work tirelessly in the best interests of NSW Aboriginal residents, and today's announcement assists us greatly in continuing to build a positive, practical partnership with the Keneally government in NSW.

There's a tendency these days to ignore the symbolic over the practical, but there's no good reason of course, why we can't do both.

Health, housing and education are all obviously vital to Aboriginal people, but so too is getting the relationship right between black and white Australians.

This sort of wonderful gesture goes a long way to achieving that.

It's hoped today's announcement in the Koori Mail newspaper will also go a long way to help Aboriginal residents of NSW feel more a part of this great state.

The express recognition of Aboriginal people in the NSW Constitution was a direct outcome of the Local Government Association of NSW 2009 Annual Conference.

It was in this meeting that NSWALC put forward 'Resolution 60A', which called upon the Federal and NSW Governments to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people of this country.

But while NSWALC warmly welcomes the move, it also provides everyone with a timely reminder of the many challenges our mob still face in 2010.

Despite the ongoing best efforts of many peak Aboriginal organisations across NSW, our people still lag far behind non Aboriginal Australians in just about every health and social indicator.

This isn't good enough, and a mountain of work lies before all of us.

Still, today's announcement shows great vision, as well as a good chance to face these issues head on.

I'd like to congratulate and thank the Premier and Minister Lynch for their foresight and leadership in this very important issue.

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