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NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

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Scrap Aboriginal Experiment says Cr Gordon

Steve Gordon, the elected Councillor for the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council's North West Region has called the Federal Government to scrap its whole-of-government experiment in Aboriginal affairs.

"The Howard and Rudd 'whole of government' concept has simply enhanced the mainstreaming of Aboriginal programs. This has been a complete failure," Cr Gordon said.

Mainstreaming meant freezing Aboriginal people out of the decision-making loop on programs that affected their daily lives, he added.

"It's time for the Minister and the bureaucrats to be accountable to Aboriginal people, and to stop their massive propaganda programs.

"Glossy brochures and calendars don't put food on the table."

Councillor Gordon stressed that countless government reports into Aboriginal affairs had clearly shown that programs aimed at assisting Aboriginal people must be conceived, developed and controlled by Aboriginal people.

"Solutions can be found at the grass roots level. It is important that Aboriginal people control and operate these programs."

Councillor Gordon warned that the Government must deal with Aboriginal leaders elected by their people, not just those anointed by Government.

"To do otherwise is not only disrespectful, it is bound to fail.

"The fact is this Government is doing its best to silence the voice of Aboriginal Australia. This government claims it has sent troops to Iraq in a bid to introduce democracy, but on the home front it adopts a less than democratic approach to Aboriginal democracy. What absolute hypocrisy."

Councillor Gordon was critical of Minister Macklin's claims that her Government is committed to "forging a new relationship, based on mutual trust and respect, with Aboriginal Australians."

"Trust and respect with the Aboriginal community is something which is earned.

"It cannot be bestowed upon individuals at the whim of a Minister.

Councillor Gordon said there needs to be a genuine partnership forged between the Federal Government and the Aboriginal people of New South Wales.

"So far we have not seen much evidence of this in New South Wales.

"The Rudd Government seems pre-occupied with Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory.

"Aboriginal people in New South Wales want this Government to implement policies to overcome the severe disadvantage they face in areas such as housing, health and education.

"So far this year we have received nothing.

"It is simply not good enough."

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