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NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Call for worldwide study of assimilation policies on Aboriginal Peoples

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Aboriginal delegates to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, have called on the UN to instigate a worldwide study, into the economic and health impacts of assimilation policies on Aboriginal peoples.

NSW Aboriginal Land Council delegate, Councillor Patricia Laurie, speaking at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, said even today the Australian Government's policies that impacted on Aboriginal Australians, were still not consistent with major UN principles.

Councillor Laurie said that Governments had not followed the leadership of United Nations agencies.

"Past and current employment and enterprise development strategies did not sufficiently engage Aboriginal Australians." Councillor Laurie said.

She stressed that they continued to be based around mainstream ideologies for all Australians and wrongly assumed that such mainstream employment strategies, were automatically transferable to Aboriginal Australians.

"This was misleading."

"It compounded Aboriginal peoples' right to access parity with the rest of Australia." Councillor Laurie said Australian Government policies must recognise Aboriginal people's primary roles, particularly in wealth creation.

"Australian Governments continue to disregard people-driven approaches, to addressing Indigenous disadvantage."

Councillor Laurie emphasised that the push for what have been termed ‘practical outcomes’, disrupted and undermined the exercise and enjoyment of human rights, by Aboriginal Australians.

“Government policy must address social justice and reconciliation.” Councillor Laurie said.

“Many Governments, such as Australia’s, have had a history of ‘assimilationist’ policies.”

It was time that the world, with UN endorsement and support, developed a research agenda to study the real impact of these policies.

In many respects they were still alive and practiced even today.

The Forum was also urged to vote to encourage all States (Governments) to recognise the need for investment, to improve Aboriginal health outcomes.

Councillor Laurie, NSWALC’s elected representative for the NSW North Coast Region, is one of two NSWALC Councillors attended the Permanent Forum. The other is Wiradjuri Region Councillor, Craig Cromelin.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, attracts some 2,000 representatives of indigenous groups, as well as representatives of Government, civil society, academia, the United Nations and other intergovernmental organisations.

The Permanent Forum was established by the UN’s Economic and Social Council in 2000, to discuss indigenous issues relating to economic and social development, the environment, education, health and human rights.

This year’s Forum looks at the relationship between indigenous peoples and industrial corporations, the need to promote corporation social responsibility, climate change, the Arctic region and land tenure.

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