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Indigenous Australians

Membership of the Expert Panel

In December 2010, following nominations by the public, the Australian Government announced the membership of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians.

The Panel consists of a range of respected and accomplished individuals, including Indigenous and community leaders, constitutional experts and parliamentary members. The Panel will be co-chaired by Professor Patrick Dodson and Mr Mark Leibler AC.

The Expert Panel will lead a wide-ranging national public consultation and engagement program throughout 2011. The Panel will report its findings to the Australian Government by December 2011.

Co-Chairs



Professor Patrick Dodson

Professor Patrick Dodson is a Yawuru man from Broome, Western Australia. He is Chairman of the Lingiari Foundation, an Indigenous non-government advocacy and research foundation Chairman of the Kimberley Institute, an independent Indigenous think tank and policy development organisation and Director of the Indigenous Policy, Dialogue and Research Unit at the University of New South Wales. He is a former Chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and a former Commissioner into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Professor Dodson was the winner of the 2008 Sydney Peace Prize.



Mr Mark Leibler AC

Mr Mark Leibler AC is currently the Senior Partner in the leading Australian law firm Arnold Bloch Leibler and a prominent leader of the Australian and international Jewish community. Since 2005, Mr Leibler has been the co-chair of Reconciliation Australia. He is an activist in the area of social justice and public affairs and is a supporter of Indigenous rights. Mr Leibler graduated from the University of Melbourne's Law School with first class

honours, sharing the Supreme Court Prize awarded to the year's top law graduate and has a Master of Laws with honours from Yale University. In 2005 he was appointed a Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia in recognition of his service to business, to the law particularly in the areas of taxation and commercial law, to the Jewish community internationally and in Australia, and to reconciliation and the promotion of understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Non-Parliamentary Members



Mr Graham Bradley AM

Mr Graham Bradley AM is a lawyer and professional company director. His directorships include roles as Chairman of HSBC Bank Australia, Stockland Corporation, and Anglo American Australia and he is also a director of Singapore Telecommunications. He is the current President of the Business Council of Australia, a member of the Advisory Board of the Crawford School of Government at the Australian National University and the Australian

School of Business at the University of New South Wales and a director of the European Australian Business Council. He also devotes time to several non-profit organisations, including the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and the State Library of New South Wales.



Mr Timmy 'Djawa' Burarrwanga

Mr Burarrwanga belongs to the Gumatj Clan. He was born at Yirrkala and his homeland is Bawaka in Port Bradshaw, North East Arnhem Land. He is currently the Chairman of the Yirrkala Dhanbul Aboriginal Corporation a community development organisation, Director of Lanyhapuy Homelands Association, a Board member of the Gumatj Association, and Chairman of Lirrwi Yolngu Tourism Aboriginal Corporation. He also serves on the board of numerous other Aboriginal organisations. He and his family operate a successful tourism venture on their ancestral land and he sees tourism as a culturally appropriate way of Aboriginal people earning a living. Mr Burarrwanga has a keen interest in Indigenous health, education and social issues, particularly substance abuse, domestic violence and family health.



Mr Henry Burmester AO QC

Mr Henry Burmester AO QC was Chief General Counsel in the Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) for over a decade and before that head of the Office of International Law in the Attorney-General's Department. In 2009 he became a Consultant Counsel to the AGS. Mr Burmester has appeared as Counsel for the Commonwealth in leading constitutional cases before the High Court.



The Hon Fred Chaney AO

The Hon Fred Chaney AO was born in Perth, Western Australia and was awarded an Order of Australia in 1997. He is Chair of Desert Knowledge Australia and a Board Director with Reconciliation Australia. Formerly a lawyer, Mr Chaney served as a Liberal Senator for Western Australia (1974-90) and a Member of the House of Representatives (1990-93). He held various Ministerial appointments in the Fraser government, including Aboriginal Affairs. After leaving Parliament in 1993 he undertook research into Aboriginal Affairs policy and administration as a Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia. He was Chancellor of Murdoch University for eight years until early 2003 and retired as a deputy president of the National Native Title Tribunal in April 2007.



Professor Megan Davis

Associate Professor Megan Davis is from Queensland and has Aboriginal and South Sea Islander background. She is Associate Professor and Director of the Indigenous Law Centre, Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales and is a Commissioner of the New South Wales Land and Environment Court, and an Australian member of the International Law Association's Indigenous Rights Committee. In 2011 Professor Davis will become an independent expert on the United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Professor Davis teaches, writes and researches on public law, Indigenous issues in constitutional law and international law. She has a B.A (Australian History), LLB (UQ); Grad. Dip. Leg. Pract., LLM (International Law) and recently completed a PhD in Law (ANU) on the limitations of the right to self-determination for Aboriginal women.



Mr Glenn Ferguson

Queensland solicitor Mr Glenn Ferguson is managing partner of Ferguson Cannon

Lawyers with offices in Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. Mr Ferguson is the current President of the Law Council of Australia and Chair of the Law Council of Australia's Indigenous Legal Issues Committee. He is a former President of LAWASIA, the Law Association for Asia/Pacific, and the Queensland Law Society. He is also an active member of a number of legal bodies, including the Queensland College of Law, the Queensland Law Foundation, the Federal Attorney General's International Legal Services Advisory Council and has served on a number of Federal and State advisory boards. He also has extensive board experience in the not for profit, education, medical and charity sectors. Mr Ferguson practices mainly in the areas of commercial litigation, insurance and migration law.



Ms Lauren Ganley

Ms Lauren Ganley is a descendant of the Kamilaroi people. She has been with Telstra Corporation for 28 years and is the General Manager of Telstra's National Indigenous Directorate where she is committed to leading business activities that provide positive outcomes for Indigenous communities across Australia. Ms Ganley is a member of the Northern Territory Indigenous Economic Development Taskforce, Business Council of Australia - Business Indigenous Network, and the Indigenous Financial Services Network.



Professor Marcia Langton

Professor Marcia Langton is a descendant of the Yiman and Bidjara nations and was born and raised in Queensland. Her Doctorate of Philosophy was awarded by Macquarie University for her study of a customary Aboriginal land tenure system of eastern Cape York. Professor Langton has held the Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne since February 2000. She has made a significant contribution to Indigenous studies, as well as to government and non-government policy throughout her career. Her contributions as an Aboriginal rights advocate and anthropologist were recognised in 1993 when she was made a Member of the Order of Australia. Professor Langton became a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia in 2001 and was awarded the inaugural Neville Bonner Award for Indigenous Teacher of the Year in 2002. She is a member of the Board of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership and Chair of the Museums and Galleries of the Northern Territory Board.



Mr Bill Lawson AM

Mr Bill Lawson AM is an Engineer and a Principal of Sinclair Knight Merz where he is Manager of the Indigenous Sector and Group Manager of the Company's global Corporate Social Responsibility Program. In 2006 Mr Lawson was awarded an Order of Australia for his development of the national youth assistance initiative, the Beacon Foundation. He was also awarded the 2003 Australian Professional Engineer of the year, and has worked on major projects in Tasmania and the Antarctic. Mr Lawson is based in Tasmania.



Ms Alison Page

Ms Alison Page is an award winning Aboriginal designer, cultural planner and Manager of the Saltwater Freshwater Arts Alliance on the NSW Mid North Coast. Since 1997, Ms Page has worked with various urban and rural Aboriginal communities in the delivery of culturally appropriate architectural and design services in association with Merrima Design. Exploring links between cultural identity, art and design, her work spans architecture, interiors, jewellery and public art. Ms Page is a regular panellist of the ABC program 'The New Inventors' and in her current position is working with ten communities as Director of the Saltwater Freshwater Festival.



Mr Noel Pearson

Mr Noel Pearson is a descendent of the Bagaarmugu and the Guggu Yalanji peoples. He was born in Cooktown and grew up at Hope Vale Mission, Cape York Peninsula. Mr Pearson has been strongly involved in campaigning for the rights of Cape York Aboriginal people and played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Cape York Land Council in 1990. He has worked on Native Title cases, including the historic Wik decision. In 2004, he became the Director of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership. Mr Pearson's current work with the Institute and Cape York Partnerships is focused on breaking down passive welfare dependency and reinstating the rights of Aboriginal people to take responsibility for their lives.

Parliamentary Members



Mr Rob Oakeshott MP

Mr Rob Oakeshott is the Independent Member of the House of Representatives for the Division of Lyne in New South Wales. He has been in the public arena since 1995, when he became the youngest member of the New South Wales Parliament. Having entered Federal Parliament in September 2008, he has invested heavily in Committee work, including the Joint Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and currently as Chair of the Public Accounts and Audit Committee and Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and a Bachelor of Laws.



Ms Janelle Saffin MP

Ms Janelle Saffin has served as the Federal Member for the rural seat of Page, New South Wales, since 2007. She has been active in the Australian Labor Party since 1982 and served in the NSW Legislative Council from 1995 to 2003. Ms Saffin holds qualifications in teaching and law, and her legal career has included work as a solicitor and advocate from local to international level with a particular focus on human rights. From 2004 to 2007 she was senior political adviser to His Excellency Dr Jose Ramos-Horta while the Nobel Laureate was Timor Leste's Foreign Minister, Defence Minister, Prime Minister and President.



Senator Rachel Siewert

Before being elected as Australian Greens Senator for Western Australia in 2005, Ms Rachel Siewert spent sixteen years as the coordinator of the Conservation Council of Western Australia and played a role in a number of national and state forums tackling pressing environmental and social justice issues. Senator Siewert is Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs and serves as party whip for the Australian Greens.



Mr Ken Wyatt MP

Mr Ken Wyatt has Noongar, Yamatji and Wongi heritage. In 2010 he was elected as the Liberal member for Hasluck, Western Australia in the House of Representatives. He worked as a primary school teacher for 16 years before moving into leadership roles in the public sector in health and education. He co-chaired the Council of Australian Governments' Indigenous Health Working Group, achieving a \$1.6 billion commitment from all jurisdictions to improve Indigenous health outcomes.

Ex-Officio Members



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission
Mr Mick Gooda

Mr Mick Gooda is a descendent of the Gangulu people of central Queensland. He is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the Australian Human Rights Commission. He is also a Board Member of the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Queensland, and is the Australian representative on the International Indigenous Council which focuses on healing and addictions. He has an interest in the Lateral Violence Program in Canada and has been working closely with the First Nations Peoples of Canada on the relevance of this program to Australia.



Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
Ms Josephine Bourne

Ms Josephine Bourne is a mainland Torres Strait Islander born in Townsville, North Queensland. Her mother's ancestry is from Mabuiag Island and the Murray Islands and her father's ancestry is from Mabuiag Island and Moa Island (Kubin). Ms Bourne is currently co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and was an inaugural Director of the National Congress since its incorporation in April 2010. Ms Bourne also worked with the National Indigenous Representative Body Steering Committee. She has made a significant contribution to many local, regional, state and national agencies through committees and working groups dealing with community capacity building, multi-media development and youth leadership.



Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
Mr Sam Jeffries

Mr Sam Jeffries is a member of the Murrawari nation from north-west New South Wales and southern Queensland and was born and raised in Brewarrina New South Wales. He is co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. Active in Indigenous affairs for more than 25 years, Mr Jeffries has worked in the cotton, hotel and meat industries, in the public service, and in a range of community organisations. His previous roles include Board Member of the New South Wales Aboriginal Housing Office, Chair of the National Forum of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Regional Chairpersons and Chair of the Barwon Darling Alliance (an alliance between Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and five local councils).