

Recognising Indigenous Rights

O'Donoghue, Lois "Indigenous Peoples - Recognising Indigenous rights" Infocus (Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW) 18(4), 1995, p 21.

forward to the continued support of the ECC of NSW...

Australia is increasingly acknowledging the rights of its original inhabitants, writes ATSI Chairperson Lois O'Donoghue.

The Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW has worked hard to promote unity and amity among Australians of more than 200 different backgrounds. In terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history of over 40 years, these communities have been recent arrivals to our country. Nevertheless, the principles of multiculturalism, which over the past two decades have assumed such importance in Australia, have been very beneficial to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In the last 20 years we too have seen great changes. We have seen the development of a more interesting, diverse, humane and tolerant national culture - a culture that increasingly recognises our rights and status as the original Australians. I am happy to acknowledge that the ECC of NSW has always had as a guiding principle that, if justice were denied the founding peoples of the continent, then there was little hope of justice for anyone.

Australia still has a way to go in owning its past, in acknowledging that the national wealth was built upon our dispossession. All Australians must come together in shaping our nation's future. This will involve both institutional reform, as outlined in Recognition, Rights and Reform, ATSI's recent social justice report to the Government, and an effort of understanding and imagination on the part of non-indigenous Australians.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people look