

14/07/11

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AUSTRALIA



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Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – Fourth Session

Item 5: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Australian Government was pleased to announce its support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in April 2009. We are also pleased to see that since the third session of the Expert Mechanism, Canada and the United States have announced their support for the Declaration.

At the core of the Declaration is the right of Indigenous peoples to have full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Australia's support for the Declaration provides a new impetus to work together in trust and good faith, to advance human rights and close the gap in opportunities and life outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Australian Human Rights Commission on their production of a range of community education materials on the Declaration. These materials will raise awareness of the Declaration, and will act as a guide to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples understand the Declaration's principles. The Australian Government looks forward to continuing its engagement with the Australian Human Rights Commission and in particular the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner on the Declaration.

Mr Chair

The Australian Government's Indigenous policies are consistent with the spirit of the Declaration. We continue to work closely with Indigenous Australia in relation to increased community consultation and to work in partnership with Indigenous Australians.

In addition, the structure of the representative body the *National Congress of Australia's First Peoples*, which we spoke about earlier, strongly affirms a commitment to representation and advocacy for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at a national level.

The Australian Government is also committed to pursuing recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Constitution. By way of background, in December 2010, the Australian Government appointed an Expert Panel to lead a wide-ranging national public consultation and engagement program throughout 2011 to hear the Australian people's views on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples might be recognised in the Constitution. The Panel will report to the Government by December 2011 on possible options for constitutional change and the level of support they are likely to receive from the Australian public.

These initiatives constitute important steps consistent with the Declaration in Australia in the interests of building a nation based on strong relations and mutual respect.

Thank you for the opportunity to ^{update} ~~share~~ to the mechanism on Australia's use of the declaration to promote +