

National Board Communiqué Meeting No. 4 Adelaide, December 2012



The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples (Congress) Board met at Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute in Adelaide from 1-2 December 2011 and discussed a range of issues which are summarised below:

Statement of Principles

The Board adopted a Statement of Principles to underpin the development and implementation of all policies, position statements and submissions prepared by Congress. It will be published on the Congress website.

Peoples Forum - Sovereignty and Self-Determination - Tent Embassy 40th Anniversary

The Board agreed that the Congress contribute to celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in January 2012. The first Congress Peoples Forum would bring together speakers from across Australia and invite Members to participate for free in discussions on sovereignty and self-determination. Details will be promoted on the website.

Constitutional Recognition

Co-Chair Broun advised the Board the Expert Panel is in its final stages of work on their report to Government. The report has been shaped by input from Congress Members and the ex-officio participation of both Congress Co-Chairs. It is due to be delivered to the Federal Government in January next year. Congress will campaign for the Government to adopt proposals in line with feedback from our Members and develop a strategy for any proposed referendum following the Government's response.

National Cultural Policy

The Board finalised a Congress statement to the Minister for the Arts, Simon Crean, on a proposed national cultural policy. The statement will be published on the website.

Languages Inquiry

Final statement confirmed to the House of Representatives Inquiry into language learning in communities. The statement will be published on the website.

Water Reform

Co-Chair Malezer recently represented Congress at a stakeholder meeting of the First Peoples Water Engagement Council. The proposed First Peoples National Water Summit is to be held in March next year and the Board agreed to the appointment of Co-Chair Malezer as one of the persons nominated to write up the report of the Summit.

National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy

Congress was recently invited to be a non-government member of the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy. After agreeing to participate in the Partnership, the Board nominated Directors Yarram and Eggington to lead this work for Congress. The Partnership is being coordinated by the Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Helen Szoke and will be developing a discussion paper due out early next year.

Directors Reports

The Board resolved to make available to Members, on a regular basis, updates on the work of Directors including meetings, community visits and other information of interest to Members. The summary reports should be made available on the website shortly.

Policy Working Groups

The Board agreed to the establishment of three additional Policy Working Groups on Education, Country and Health. These will be in addition to the trial of a Justice Working Group which began meeting last month. The Working Groups are a way to harness the knowledge of Delegates, Member organisations and Members with specific expertise to inform Congress's policy and advocacy work.

Use of term: 'indigenous'

The Board resolved to promote the use of terms that better represent our peoples and reflect what are used by our mobs. In 2012 Congress will start a campaign to encourage Government and the Australian community to refer to our peoples as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and not use the generic and clinical term 'indigenous'. Congress has had an unofficial approach of referring to 'indigenous' only when quoting another author or for a global reference to First Nation peoples. This issue has been raised in many different forms by our Members since the establishment of Congress.

National Congress 2012

The venue and dates for the next annual meeting have been confirmed for Alice Springs. The 120 Delegates will meet at the Alice Springs Convention Centre in the week of September 24th-28th 2012.

Membership

The Board noted 176 new individual members and 3 new organisations have been approved since the last board meeting. This brings our total membership to more than 3300 individuals and more than 130 organisations. The full list of organisations can be viewed on the website.

The new membership database has been commissioned with Members mailed a new card (without an expiry date) and instructions on how to log in to our website to update details or send us any new contacts.

Serious efforts have been made to invite organisations to consider membership and a mail out went to ORIC registered bodies recently.

Congress is hoping for a presence at all Survival Day activities around the country and between Directors, Delegates and Members holding stalls and getting our sign up forms out, we hope to see another boost of new Members.

Next Meeting

The Board will next meet in Canberra on 9-10 February 2012.