



# WANTOK 2012

## Australian South Sea Islander National Conference

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Bundaberg, Qld Australia 6th – 9th April 2012

Day 2 Outcomes: National Representative Body, Vision Statement, Mission Statement, ASSI Values, Purpose, Objectives, Key Focus Areas, Interim Steering Committee, Interim Steering Committee Terms of Reference

## **INTRODUCTION**

The establishment of a national voice for Australia South Sea Islanders (ASSI) is not only right and just, it also represents good practice in terms of harnessing the knowledge and input of those who are most affected by the policies and issues that face ASSI themselves. In order for the new body to be a success it must have the support of ASSI people. That support will only be gained if the structure and position of the new representative body genuinely reflects the status and rights of ASSI - culturally, socially, economically, and politically.

### ***Why is a National ASSI Representative Body important for Australian South Sea Islanders?***

It was voted unanimously by delegates at the 2012 Wantok Australian South Sea Island National Conference in Bundaberg, Queensland, 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> April 2012 that ASSI peoples wanted a new National Representative Body.

A new National ASSI Representative Body is critical to provide ASSI peoples with a national voice. Our people have been without such a voice and have suffered as a result.

A new National ASSI Representative Body will enable the goals, aspirations, interests and values of ASSI peoples to be heard in national debate, as well as enabling the diversity of perspectives of Australia's first peoples to be recognised.

The National ASSI Representative Body will have an essential role in advocating for the recognition and protection of the human rights of ASSI people. It will provide a mechanism to give meaning to and pursue the exercise of our rights. This includes recognising our right to determine our political status and pursue our economic, social and cultural development.

A National ASSI Representative Body can empower and inspire ASSI people by enabling individuals and groups to participate in decision-making processes that affect us. The National ASSI Representative Body will enable us to inform and feel part of policies that affect our lives and those of our families and communities.

The National ASSI Representative Body can inspire change within our families, communities and associations that is informed and driven by ASSI people. We want to work with government and other agencies in designing and applying solutions to the social problems faced by us on a day to day and generational basis. We want to work together to overcome the poverty, inequality and injustice faced by ASSI peoples.

We also see the National ASSI Representative Body as an important mechanism to assist government in shaping its approach and in holding them accountable for service delivery to ASSI individuals and communities. We have a role in partnering with government to ensure that services are delivered in a manner that is meaningful for our communities, and that appropriately recognises our social and cultural issues.

We face challenges that will take at least one and in some cases, two generations to solve, with many of the problems today having been generations in the making. We need to have governments focused over the longer term if we are to see real change in our communities. We aspire to achieve bi-partisan support for addressing the challenges faced by our communities over the longer term. We also note that sustainable progress will only occur when we own our own problems, solutions and control our own future.

The National ASSI Representative Body also has a critical role to play in supporting inter-generational dialogue among ASSI people. This can build a shared journey and vision between our generations to ensure that we plan for the future and nurture our future ASSI leadership. Today's leaders should

aim to leave a lasting legacy for future generations of ASSI people by ensuring that their rights to self-determination and their status as Australia's First Peoples' are recognised and protected.

Additionally, the National ASSI Representative Body has an important function in establishing and maintaining regional stability. ASSI people are descendants of the Melanesian and other Pacific Islands – some of Australia's closest neighbours. The National ASSI Representative Body will be able to provide a significant diplomatic service to:

1. Its representative members, particularly by providing a focal point in facilitating regional dialogue around the reconnection of families and maintenance of the broader SSI diaspora; and
2. To the Australian Government and people by providing culturally meaningful input into the multi-lateral relations and supporting the social and economic development of Melanesian and Pacific Island countries.

For the National ASSI Representative Body to contribute in these ways it must always remember that it is accountable to ASSI people. The Body will need to ensure that it operates openly and transparently, maintains high standards of ethical conduct and good governance, and is inclusive for ASSI people.

It will need to be proactive and focused on setting forth a positive vision to improve the wellbeing of ASSI people. It must earn respect among ASSI people rather than demand it.

## **DRAFT VISION STATEMENT**

We are a national body which acknowledges and believes in the unique ways that Australians of South Sea Islander heritage contribute to the broader Australian society. This contribution reflects our South Sea Islander heritage and will be recognised by all Australians because we are of: One Spirit; One Mind; One Voice - commonly seeking prosperity based on respect.

## **DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT**

To advance the cultural, social and economic condition of Australian South Sea Islanders through good governance and leadership by:

- Modeling ASSI values
- Inspiring the shared vision of ASSI's
- Enabling ASSI people to act
- Challenging the processes
- Encouraging and supporting ASSI people
- Operating effectively and with influence in different cultures

## **ASSI VALUES**

The organisation is underpinned by the ASSI values of:

- The importance of our unique common cultural heritage

- The assurance of identity as Australians with South Sea Islander heritage
- A unity of purpose in constructing a legitimate and unique place in Australian society
- The central place of family in building for the future
- Establishing in our children a confidence in themselves and their right to develop complete personhood
- A sense of integrity in our interaction with the wider Australian society
- A vision in terms of the potential and unique contribution that Australians with South Sea Islander heritage can make to the wider Australian society

## **DRAFT PURPOSE**

The purpose and role of the National ASSI Representative Body is to:

- Formulating policy and advice
- Advocacy, lobbying and diplomacy
- Ensuring the presence of, and contributing to, mechanisms to monitor and evaluate government performance

## **DRAFT OBJECTIVES**

- (a) To provide a forum and a voice for the Australian-born descendants of those Pacific Islanders (known as “South Sea Islanders” or in particular, the men, women and children who were also known as “Kanakas”) who were brought either voluntarily or by deception or force to work as indentured labours in Australia before 1906. (The descendants of these people shall be hereinafter called “Australian South Sea Islanders” or by the acronym, ASSI);
- (b) To build a case that shows that members of ASSI have been a disadvantaged group within Australian society for more than a century and to gain official recognition for ASSI by the Australian, State and Territorial and Local Governments, as a disadvantaged culturally and linguistically diverse, minority group of Australian citizens;
- (c) To get legislation passed which will provide the additional assistance necessary to enable the ASSI to attain equality of life with other Australians;
- (d) To establish communication systems and mechanisms for educational purposes, both universal and specialist, to overcome the social and economic disadvantages which now exist in the ASSI community, Australia-wide;
- (e) To provide opportunity for ASSI to acquire land to develop primarily for ASSI appropriate community farms, affordable housing and community living areas, by whatever lawful means necessary or convenient, and generally for the benefit of everybody;
- (f) To stand together with the Sovereign First Peoples of the Country “The Aborigines” and work alongside the Torres Strait Islander Nation and together, known as “First Australians”- and herein appear as “Sovereign Peoples”) in their vision for recognition and equality;

- (g) To employ a mutual understanding of the importance of human dignity and generosity of spirit that potentially can be found within Australian values to foster a respect, inclusion and acceptance of every person into Australian society;
- (h) To research, create and establish entities that are historically, traditionally, culturally, socially, technologically and futuristically appropriate for ASSI;
- (i) In addition to these basic objectives, and to promote and advance the aspirations of ASSI, the purpose of National ASSI Representative Body shall be deemed to include:
  - i) Establishing and supporting National ASSI Representative Body Associations, Corporations, Funds, Foundations, Trusts, Schemes, or whatever Bodies or Conveniences are deemed necessary (hereinafter called “entities”) and assisting in the establishment and support of ASSI or ASSI individual entities;
  - ii) Using the above bodies to accept gifts and bounties that will advance the objectives of the National ASSI Representative Body;
  - iii) Making submissions and proposals for contributions to promote the objectives of and the entities it establishes, supports and assists;
  - iv) Establishing a consciousness and a favourable understanding within the broader Australian society of the unique history of Australians of South Seas Islander heritage and their past contribution to Australian welfare and their subsequent social disadvantage by linking into existing networks of the media, in all of its genres, and using all lawful means of raising awareness of all ASSI entities; and
  - v) Developing financial awareness and engaging in the investment, borrowing and lending of finances to promote the welfare of ASSI members and ASSI entities.

## **KEY FOCUS AREAS**

- Promote Cultural Awareness within and without the ASSI
- Reconnection between individuals and families of the SSI heritage in Australia and Vanuatu
- To work for Legislative Change
- To develop Corporate Governance and Leadership
- To work for Justice for who have been disadvantaged by past governmental and societal practices
- To develop a Sustainable Economic Future for members of the ASSI Associations
- To gain Access to Governmental Finances and Resources
- To improve the overall Health of members of the ASSI Associations
- To ensure the adequate Education of children and youth of the ASSI
- To improve Housing for members of the ASSI
- To develop Identity – through historic research and data collection, collation and usage
- To build Strategic Relationships with all entities who can advance ASSI welfare
- To improve Employment opportunities for ASSI members
- To develop an awareness and pride in the unique history and culture of members of the ASSI
- Identification, preservation and maintenance of the significant cultural heritage sites, artefacts, and oral histories of ASSI people and ensuring that any interested parties have free and unencumbered access and that they are legally protected for future generations of ASSI people

- Ensuring the ongoing cultural transmission of the oral histories and values of ASSI people so that the youth and the following generations have an awareness of and a deep connection with their heritage and their history

## **INTERIM WORKING COMMITTEE**

Representatives elected to the Interim Working Committee elected by delegates at the 2012 Wantok Australian South Sea Islander National Conference in Bundaberg include:

- ASSI PJ Executives: Emelda Davis (President), Danny Togo (Vice President), Mary Day, Shireen Malamoo, Matthew Poll and Donna Carla-Laube
- ASSI Association Presidents/Contacts:
  - Mathew John Schlieff (ASSIVIA: Brisbane)
  - Meriana Obed
  - Dennis Bobongie (NISSIUP Inc. Kallangur Qld)
  - Jodie Togo/Fiona Mount: (TSSIA: Tweed Heads)
  - Chief Simon Kaukare (Vanuatu Indigenous Descendants Association)
  - Kakaë Pakoa (ni-Vanuatu & Australian South Sea Islander Families, Brisbane)
  - Kel Nagas (B&DSSIAG Inc. Bundaberg)
  - Don Fewquandie (DSSISC Inc. Sunshine Coast)

These are the ASSI Associations representatives that identified themselves at the Day 2 selection of the Interim Working Committee. Remaining ASSI Associations and Presidents who were not present are currently being identified and contacted to ensure that their involvement is included.

## **INTERIM WORKING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Interim Steering Committee's task is to:

- develop a preferred model for a new national ASSI representative body for presentation to the ASSI delegates of the 2013 Wantok National South Sea Islander National Conference; and
- ensure strong community support for such a representative model.

**Day 2 Facilitator: Duane Vickery**

**Paper prepared by Duane Vickery with contributions from Tom Dick and Hon Ralph Regenvanu**