

**Our Women Our Visions
Report
Monday 18th June –Tuesday 19th June 2001**

Leanne Miller, Chairperson Koorie Women Mean Business Incorporated

On behalf of the Board of Koorie Women Mean Business I would like to welcome you. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this region, elders present, KWMB board members, Chair Binjirru Regional Council – Daphne Yarram, Jackie Huggins and our speakers.

It has been a long time between gatherings and as the only statewide aboriginal women's group (not for profit); we would like to see this occur more often.

The aim of Our women Our Visions is:

- To share knowledge and information
- Identify and discuss communication mechanisms
- Extend and strengthen Aboriginal women's networks.

Because we have a mixed group of women from across the state present the decision was that we would like to ask you to assist us with considering some simple conference principles:

- Observe customs, protocols and traditions;
- Respect and acknowledge the diversity of women at the conference;
- Allow others the chance to speak;
- Provide others with encouragement and;
- Build on or identify linkages and collaborations you can make with others.

For us Our Women Our Vision is part of the outcomes of women's camps we held within Binjirru and Tumbukka ATSIC Regions. It is one of the outcomes which assist in highlighting national and state issue that affect aboriginal people – particularly women. I will ask that you seize the opportunity to chat with our guests in and outside the conference and to ask questions.

Daphne Yarram, Chairperson Binjurri Regional Council, ATSIC

In greeting you I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land Kulin Nations and to thank KWMB for facilitating a conference for our women across the state. There always seems to be a short fall where our women have an opportunity to come together in an informal way to share ideas and life experiences and just to have a meeting place. I look forward today to sitting amongst women and sharing ideas, expectations and also to take the opportunity to voice your opinions.

For us as women this is the chance to tell not only (ATSIC) regional council but to give feed back to other agencies. Find out what their responsibilities are to our women this conference allows you to do this.

I encourage our local women to start becoming aware of their strengths and hopefully regaining confidence to help speak up not only within the local community but on broader issues.

I am motivated by the strengths of Aboriginal women by the fact that the communities are starting to come together using the resources of their women and especially the elders. The elder's input is really important to me. Along with the opportunity for this to become an ongoing event

On behalf of Binjurri Regional Council I wish to thank you women for participating in this event. It has been a long time between gatherings since women had the opportunity to talk about political issues, in fact any issues that are affecting them. Koorie Women Mean Business have done a range of activities funded by Binjirru Regional Council over the years around women and family I have been able to participate and encourage the quality of what they do, the type of outcomes all that sort of infrastructure that drives us forward.

Your involvement encourages us to go back and ask KWMB to run women's activities. Over the next 2 days we hope that you leave with something to look back on and think that it was deadly while also hoping you get something out of it you can use.

I challenge you ladies to get up have your say, please do and encourage us all to not only listen and learn but also share ideas and I look forward to catching up with everyone.

Jackie Huggins, member Reconciliation Australia, Deputy Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, University of Queensland, Author, and Historian

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this country Kulin Nation on whose land we are meeting and their living and vibrant culture, and to also thank the organisers for inviting me here, to share with you. I think if there is one thing that I really love to do as I go around the country is to talk with our own women that gives me a lot of heart and a lot of satisfaction. Thanks Leanne Miller for insisting and thanks to Dot May and Donna Power for really making me feel welcome when I arrived in the freezing cold last night.

I would also to mention one of my other jobs I've been appointed to chair the Queensland Domestic Violence Council. It's got Twenty-Five members on there Five of us are Indigenous; it's Ministerial Council to the State Government. I guess they have probably seen the need for women and the escalating violence within our community to be addressed. We have the Aboriginal Women's Task Force Report that some of you might know of it wasn't my mob that did that it was another independent mob of community women who went around the country. But I think the importance of having five Indigenous Members on the Board of seventeen is really good. Of course we dominate as women there I think we have got about five men on that board. Probably the only board that you will ever see those kind of figures given.

Reconciliation Australia/Council for Reconciliation

I am now on the board called Reconciliation Australia Foundation it's a board of nine we have been placed there as a result of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation The old board nominated those of us who were to stay. Only two members of the council from last time, myself and Reverend Jinniinnie Gondara from Arnhem Land were the two carryovers to try to create the continuity that needs to happen within reconciliation.

In our country a lot of people have been asking me where is it? What's happened ?, you haven't been visible. That is quite true and I just need to let you know where we are at in terms of what we are trying to do and what we are trying to achieve and then hopefully from then on things might happen.

I think on a greater scale when you think that the whole funding that was provided to Council for Reconciliation in the 10 years operating was given the equivalent of erecting and bringing down the Sydney 2000 Games - beach volleyball stadium makes you put it into a little more perspective doesn't it. Makes you think. Well, where are people's priorities in our country in terms of social justice and the way in which we must move forward.

The money that we have now in Reconciliation Australia for the foundation is the money that was given to us by the federal government as we left the council it is equivalent to about six months funding that the old council used to receive. Six

months funding to do a whole range of things to do a lifetimes work because we are an independent body. We don't get money we are not a statutory body we don't get money from a government or organizations, none of us are government employees on the foundation. We have to get sponsorships and try to create a huge fundraising capacity in order for us to do a certain amount of our projects around the country.

That's pretty difficult under the present circumstance because a lot of people out there think that we get bucket loads of money as you know and they say why give it to an Aboriginal organisation.

Local governments have been very good support for us in the reconciliation process because that's where it's got to start it's got to start at the local level it's about us all working together and forming partnerships and doing things together between Indigenous and non Indigenous people. We have all seen those walks over the bridge about a million people walked for reconciliation last year I guess the challenge for those of us in reconciliation Australia is how to translate that very good will into some other kind of idea where we can get to the absolute core of many of our social and economic disadvantage programs and issues that we face.

There is a little reconciliation group in a shire called Pine Rivers where I live and one of the Ladies rang me up the other night. They wanted to get some seed funding for NAIDOC. The chairperson of the Pine Rivers Shire Council is a very well known National party member. They gave them fifty dollars and said with it blackfellas get too much already so therefore that is all that they can give so yeah we know those kinds of things still exist in our country and we know that there is a lot of miss information about where the actual dollar goes in terms of who gets the money and who doesn't for the funding.

Now how do we translate those actions into tangible outcomes is certainly the challenge that faces the board we recognised three key priorities to work on over the coming period.

1. To ensure that the social and economic disadvantage of Indigenous peoples is Fully addressed.
2. To facilitate public discussion on the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the issues of a treaty and agreements.
3. To work cooperatively with all parts of the people's movements to develop Partnerships and projects, which deliver tangible reconciliation outcomes.

The first point absolutely recognises that reconciliation cannot be achieved unless we really start to address the social and economic disadvantages that still exist in our communities. And fix those programs because otherwise reconciliation has been meaningless for the last 10 years. How can we actually bring up those levels of disadvantage and how can we work in partnerships with other groups and that's where it must be in partnership with other groups that have the power and the privilege to allow us to actually do something to bring down those high incarceration rates, bring

down the high unemployment rates education and every facet of the social spectrum Indigenous people we are now at the bottom of it. Our health how we improve our health statistics how do we fix what should be rightfully ours.

How do we get access to services that every other Australian takes for granted, how do we get through that we know that there is an underlying issue here of prejudice and racism which is at the very core and the very heart of why those things don't happen.

So we talk about symbolic and practical reconciliation it's about where we marry the two, those symbolic gestures are very important as well.

The second point that I talked about was the need for a treaty and I would like to come back to that as I finish up. Because I know that some people would like to know what our position is on a treaty and we feel we can work within the wider community to get discussion going rather than ATSIC. We know and we support ATSIC's right to look at the Indigenous community and try to get a feeling whether people want a treaty or they don't. I think that it is our responsibility to start talking with those wider groups that we have already got those relationships with. But there is a need for a treaty settlement or an agreement something that can really acknowledge the past our relationships with each other the past that translates to the present and about our unfinished business because there is heaps of that. How do we address that unfinished business we want something that establishes a framework for the future, a framework for the working of the future.

The third point is that we know and we have seen that the future of Australia lies in the hands of the people. It's people power. We were surprised when we went to Sydney I thought maybe 300,000 people, Sir Gus Nossal deputy CAR chair, was saying 250,000 and our media people were trying to keep him down because they thought it's not going to be near that number. Some people say it was about five hundred thousand. Then we had the march here in Melbourne and the same numbers came up so it was just really rewarding for us to think that there are so many people out there in the community that do actually care.

We all know our history we all know that we were colonised way back over 200 years ago and we know that we have never fully recovered from that colonisation process. So we are still stuck in that legacy of where to from here. The Council for Reconciliation did put out at Coroborree 2000 a document for reconciliation and a declaration. Which spoke of three things that were not acceptable to the federal government one was the need for an apology which we stuck by there was a lot of pressure on us to just say we accept the regret and sorrow motion that was passed by parliament. We said no we couldn't do that we would be selling out all of our people if we did. And our people are strongly telling us that they want an apology.

It (declaration) was about our rights to self-determination, because white fellas in this country think when you talk self-determination that you are talking about two separate states. Which we are not, we are talking about the absolute right for our own people to control and determine their own destinies.

We put a clause in the declaration within the life of the nation, which means within those laws of the Australian nation so it doesn't mean to go out and do your own thing.

I think the community education that needs to happen about the aspect of self-determination where in fact our rights lie. What is happening to our rights and issues at the moment is that they are getting by the media, transported into this vehicle of assimilation. Perhaps all the rhetoric that is coming out about Indigenous rights our rights to land to culture to spirituality is getting reported in the media as assimilations.

We are not going back to those days of assimilation even though people would want us to it's never worked for us. It never ever will work because our people will never give up their rights to their identity to maintain it a lot of people have just found their identity in the stolen generation and are coming back to it.

The other one was customary law. Looking at customary law and the way at which it can serve as a meaningful purpose in western law and how to marry that. There were three sticking points that the prime minister would not agree with us in our declaration. The other jewel that we have is a road map for reconciliation that's a guideline for how people can actually work through their government departments their non-government organizations. To try to work through about creating projects. I think that is something that really the wider community have not read yet and has not taken up by any means.

The two, the declaration and road map, are very important we also put out a final report called Reconciliation Australia Challenge that provided the amount of work we have done today and outlined the work that still remains to be done. It also set out what we hoped to achieve in true and meaningful reconciliation. People always ask me well when will reconciliation end, I don't think that it ever ends. I say to them sometimes is when we get our last person out of jail we have a job for every Aboriginal person in this country who wants one.

In relation to the treaty we recommended and I quote: Each government and Parliament recognise that this land and its waters were settled as colonies without treaty or consent and to advance reconciliation it would be most desirable if there were agreements or treaties to negotiate the process through which this might be achieved that protects the political, legal, cultural, and economic position of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recommendation six said that the Commonwealth Parliament enact legislation for which the council has provided a draft in this report to put into place a process which will unite all Australians by way of an agreement or treaty through which unresolved issues of reconciliation can be resolved.

In considering all this Reconciliation Australia believes that we can provide constructive public discussion on all aspects of the rights of gender, treaty and its priorities as well.

We know that Australia is the only Commonwealth nation in the world that has never signed a formal agreement or a treaty for its Indigenous occupants. We believe also that the agreement will settle the unfinished business of reconciliation but it needs to be negotiated and finalised. The main thing that it will require is the widespread support and efforts of many Australians but to date there has been very limited examination and debate about what the wider community wants in regard to those issues.

On the reconciliation process in the year that it started 40% of Australians believed that it wasn't an important issue for Australia Prior to Corroboree 2000. We did some polling and there were about 85% of Australians thought that it was an important issue. After Corroboree 2000 it would have been in the 90%. To say that reconciliation was a major national agenda and what we need to do now is work out how to address that. Its not easy. We have tried to do like ATSIC in many ways.

Talking to each other I think it has only been in the last 10 years that there has been a way in which we can create a dialogue as Evelyn Scott calls it we need the conversations to keep evolving and to keep talking and basically that is what we are saying Council has always been of the opinion that there has always been some formal agreement. It should be negotiated and that we welcome ATSICS initiative in launching a nation wide consultation of Indigenous peoples to seek their views about a possible treaty. Between Indigenous people and the nation. We have certainly supported broad community based discussions. We really feel that it should be at the wishes of Indigenous people to determine their own views about a treaty. Then we hope that other Australians will not simply sit back and wait passively to see what indigenous people say before discussing what Australians think.

As I move around the country their are reconciliation groups made up of non-Indigenous people who are actually talking about what a treaty might entail. I'm very encouraged by the fact that there is a lot of people still not sitting back and waiting for us to decide where we are going to head. Three weeks ago I addressed a group in Mossman in Sydney. Mossman is pretty influential their are people from all works of life who are supporting and wanting to do something for Aboriginal people in a way in which I have never seen before. I never grew up with that I'm sure that many of us never grew up with that kind of response but our kids are. We still have to remember we never keep forgetting the amount of racism and violence that still exists in our communities so we are always mindful of that and how far we can go with it.

We are not seeking to preempt the outcome of the ATSIC treaty process but we will be encouraging objective discussion and debate within the wider community because that is where we feel that we can get to grips. The wider community, the people who are working at the grass roots level in reconciliation groups all around the country that is where the peoples power exists and that is where the people are really trying to do some stuff.

On the word treaty itself those who oppose any formal settlement or even a framework agreement to set in place a process for negotiating have used and will use scare tactics to create obstacles and diversions. One of these relates to the word treaty it's politically loaded I believe that a treaty implies two nations within one. Those of us who support a settlement or a treaty whether it is called treaty or agreement

contract or what ever we need to argue the substance of the issue. We need to counteract such scare tactics.

The first thing we need to have are some formal settlement which acknowledges the facts of histories and the roles of the past recognises the indigenous peoples and provides a framework for a shared future which both sides mutually agree on without duress. The issue of the precise form and content of the settlement will be determined by the public discussion in the months ahead.

In the first place by the views of Indigenous people, who will be expressed in the process currently being organised by ATSIC the name of any such agreement, will also be a matter for public discussion that is basically where we stand on terms of the treaty proposal. We have heard all the arguments about what's a treaty going to do for people in my community they are still dying at a very young ages. How long will it last how long will it take before someone listens to us and says you know we have to stop all this. It's time for doing. We have to really get to the core of the problem that's why we think that it is very important in the reconciliation process to form those very core partnerships that will allow us all to do it.

There is one fella on our board he talks about partnership he is a businessman. There are only two women. We have all got one, two and three year terms I think three of the men have to go off at the end of the year I am going to do my best to get the vacancies filled with women. We are really missing a women's voice there are only two of us and quiet frankly I believe their needs to be more women's input.

As Shelley Spriggs and I were speaking this morning about how their needs to be more women's input into other boards and so forth. So that we can get our issues and our views up. Overall its something that we just must keep pressing as women we are the ones who will do it we are the ones who are always slogging away in our communities, and getting stressed out but we have to keep fighting with it.

Leadership

I am so very proud to of being born an Aboriginal women in this country things have been very tough and I think it just makes us more resilient and to meet with other Aboriginal women in the country, all over the country has just been one of my richest joys life's blessing.

I call myself a feminist always have been used to call myself a womanist when I studied at university but womanist / feminist same thing. I have been mentored by the best women in this country my role models have been my mother who passed away five years ago my latest political mentor. Their have been a few mentors, one was a Torres Strait islander man who was a very good mentor for me his name was Steve Mam my more recent mentor was Evelyn Scott in terms of her capacity and her way in which she would just light up the room with her very presence. She and I we shared a common experience she and I couldn't get a taxi in Sydney the cab driver wouldn't

let us into the car. Evelyn and I were in Sydney we had just attended a meeting for the Human Rights Commission some of you might know Barbara Flick. Barbara came down to the cab rank with us and we got to the Pitt St taxi rank there was about 20 to 30 people there in the cue.

We had one of our white women minders she said "we have to go get a plane in 40 minutes" and she ran up the front to ask if we could take the cab so we did. They said yeah no worries, let the ladies come down Evelyn was there in her \$600 Maggie Shepherd outfit. I was there in my navy green suit and hat not that we were drunk or misbehaving. So the cab pulled up and a little fella got out he was about 75 he said who is going to the airport and Evelyn picked the bag up and put it in. He said, "I am not taking you lot"! We said "what" He said again "who is going to the airport" he just ignored us. We said "but we are going to the airport". And he said "look I have the right to refuse whoever I want",

Evelyn and I (she is a big proud Murray woman), looked at each other it reduces you to almost nothing, you know it hurts so bad. The mob turned up and a woman jumped out of the car and said, "I saw what you were doing and you will get reported and this fella was on a mobile phone." A very good thing happened none of them would jump into that cab and I thought something is happening here. Then the fella on the mobile said "ladies why isn't this cabbie taking you" our minder sung out "because he is a racist" and then everyone refused to get in the cab. I said, "get in the cab and go, he will just go around the corner and pick up somebody else". There are 40 people waiting here to get the taxi. Just at that moment a young lawyer came looking for a cab he came down the street and jumped in.

It was amazing what people did and I had phone calls from people who gave me their cards and said that they would be our witnesses. Now the sad old story to this is we were going to take it to the human rights commission and sue but Evelyn said " he is old you know, he is going to retire, we shouldn't do it to the poor old fella"!

We got a lot of publicity out of it, so that no matter where you come from you are still on the back foot in this country to cop that. We care what happens to our people the time they don't report it but when you tell that story to non Indigenous audiences they cant believe that anybody would discriminate against Evelyn Scott they have seen her on TV and on Burkes Backyard it did more for her than Corroboree 2000! People were going up to her at the airport and shaking her hand and saying I recognise you.

I have had wonderful women mentors along the way and have met wonderful younger women, older women and they give me the strength to keep going and we believe it should be done for our women and our children in our country.

There are a lot of other women who support us in our struggle Indigenous and non-Indigenous they are absolutely there. We have always known it. What I find really amazing is the domestic violence field. We have always known that holistic approach and to include our men and to get them working on there own solutions and that become a new phenomena for a women's organization. Those who are working in family and domestic violence areas because they are saying that maybe we should look at the way that we can provide courses and perpetrator programs for men as well. It's always been there people have so much to learn from us as Indigenous women particularly because we hold all the keys to the future of our people it might not be

that we get the power to say or to do those things but we are certainly known to be behind there pushing those other people who are in power to try to get them to change their tactics.

There still needs to be that massive community education campaign that should have happened in 1967 when the referendum came down. It should have been continuing. We have been talking for twenty years now to get history and culture taught in our schools. It is still filtering down, and not it's much better than when I went to school. I got nothing my son gets a bit of it now not as much as I would like because he is one of the lucky kids he gets all his stuff from home having a very politicised mother. How do we do it relies on us and other people too.

PARTICIPANT OPEN MIKE

Jackie Huggins : You know we hear how bad it is in our regional communities but are it as bad as people say?

Some it varies depending on where the general consensus is that is very bad and something has to be done about it!

JH: what we have never really been able to do is get into the regional /remote areas the city is like wow Melbourne is the Reconciliation capital of the world they really took it on Queensland towns are very much the same it's very hard. But I went to charters towers to do a talk there is a Sister Edith, an Irish catholic nun she brought in a pastoralists the miners thitherto people from the township who had never ever spoken to one another she bought them along and they had the best time that night and it made me feel so proud the coming together and the networking that started to take place was really good to see we have to keep educating this is the key

Q HOW DOES A TREATY WORK

Treaties are usually signed on impact of discovery are people worthy of being people who had leadership usually in those countries they had chiefs ours were harder to find.

Comment: Back in Shepparton the shire office have got an Aboriginal flag flying with another flag out front. The fella from the shire offices said that he put as much money into the fixing up of the shire shrine and the RSL wants him to pull our flag down. He said no way the flag stays!

JH: I know during NAIDOC week or reconciliation week or anywhere I work they fly the flag, Flinders Island fly the flag all the time and the places where you wouldn't of even thought places. It's great that the flag will stay there.

Comment: It is good because a lot of our people went to the war; Bruce Ruxton said none of us did. I have photo's of my father and grandfather with medals!

JH: I was on the radio with him the day before the bridge walk he said, "What are they closing off that bridge for?" Somebody said "well they close it off for marathons" He said "well what about all the traffic disruptions." I said, "There is tunnel underneath there won't be any major disruptions to the road". He goes its all a pack of crap he hung up then. I had a father and a grand father in the wars my father passed away at 38 and he went to war and I often question. (He was a POW on the Burma railway.) Why did he go to war when his people weren't even citizens of there own country we were left without a father and there is a legacy of war and being a soldier.

I had a meeting in Gympie they all came out about the war that's the gun capital and I felt like how long are we going to compensate. These people don't understand that we had those similar experiences about the war and growing up without a father.

It is going to be hopefully the next generation that will grow up without those hang ups. The ages between 18 & 25 are the group that are most receptive to reconciliation they really want reconciliation in our country. Its the over 60 there is a problem with generally I know some 70 & 80 year old radical white people in the country but generally speaking its those people out of that group that have the real problem with anything indigenous

Comment: They could become seen as the changes in this life but isn't it sad what they went through. They had gone through so many extremes compared to what we go through they think that we have got it pretty good. Now I remember when my son was only 2 he was naked in front of the house, my grandad came to the house and said put some clothes on him and he was really upset. I said pop it is hot. He said no you just get something on him now. He said they will take him away. Ane it just blew me away I have never ever seen my grandfather upset. He is always such a happy little man and to see him change like that it was amazing. I thought well what did you have to live through. He talks about the good times never talks about the bad times. It is quite scary. So they have gone through so much what we are going through is probably not so extreme. They feel why should they even worry about treaty / reconciliation.

JH: The danger that we fell into was that it was 'aboriginal reconciliation' the worst thing was to put that name in the title in the first council they did that because the onus was on us then its not about us its about them fixing and working the problem for us. So when we have sorry days at home and I go there and I know that it has been organised by our own mob and link up organisation. You roll up there to speak and I just say where are all the white people here? Who are we saying sorry too ourselves. Get them to organise stuff for you next year hopefully it wont be sorry day it will be celebration day. When we receive the apology and so forth it has filtered through to some but by and large it's almost like it's our problem and we know it is not.

Comment: Even the children are being taught about racism we go down to Mooroopna state school I was walking along with this little girl. And this little white kid said this is our country I said it's our country too and we can share. But that is what her mother is telling her that we don't own it its their country there is a lot of racism coming from the parents that is where kids hear it from. You really need to go into the schools and start form there and then the next generation coming up are they going to be racist like the parents?

Until we start talking directly to the kids in primary and high school and educating them my daughter when she started high school they had to write something about the family their father was white and I am black. So I sat there with them and tell them what life was like on the mission what we used to do and that sort of thing. She took it back to school the teachers she got an A for it.

The teachers said they never had anything like that in the library not about what life was like on the mission and they asked permission to be able to put it into the library. When we were moving into our house we have had been there 3lyrs. When we went

to move in there they had a petition going round they didn't want black people in the street this was in Swan Hill. And when we moved in because he was white anyway they all thought that he was a good fella and that I was the bad one because I was black.

After we lived there for a few years they learned who was the bad one then the fella out the road his daughter was at high school and she had to do something on the aboriginals and they had nothing the young girl came across and my mum sat there at the table with her and talked about her life.

You meet people you sit down and you talk to them and they say we didn't know this and we didn't know that and that we get everything. A lady rang up on the John Laws show and said that we were getting our school shoes brought for our kids!! I'd like to see it when it was really that you couldn't even go to the op shop you had to make everything. A lot of people have false impressions from the schools. A white woman said that we should not be taught about the Aboriginals. We were not even allowed to speak our own language or to learn out language. The lady had a tray and it had 2 aboriginal men on it. One had a spear in his hand and the other standing underneath a tree it was in the post. The women said to her little fella what do you see there. He said I see two fathers fishing. So he wasn't looking at the colour you know with children most of it is taught in the home.

This is where you have got to be getting things into the schools but we have Koorie educators there but obviously they abide by the schools rules so what are their rights I don't understand how the Koorie education is being taught so how does that work?

This is coming from a community background there is a depth perception on Koorie educators is probably different to what there actual role is Koorie educators are put into schools to support Koorie students

With that power couldn't they allocate they are in there more Koorie awareness hours more cultural instruction in the school why is it we can't have somebody to be in the schools.

What do they have English history as part of studies? It's a big part of the curriculum. So the ones that determine the curriculum if there is only one Koorie student or fifty Koorie students. They learn English, Spanish, or American history. Parents need to speak to their school boards and say that they want Australian aboriginal history taught in the classroom and they should teach it at least one day a week in some of the schools.

I was just thinking of the Port Fairy educator they are in isolation the only support they have is the LAECG hopefully they operate very well and the school will look after the kids and the teachers and the principal who probably don't know anything about it because the Koorie educators were sort of imposed on schools to try and improve our kids chances. Koorie Educators are there and if they are in there it is that we can't use them in the structure or something like that to get into the schools. It has to go to the school board the school council principals and parents of indigenous and non-indigenous students coming in and saying I want Koorie culture taught let us have it

I think that in the schools there is too many people crying racism so it we could structure something in the schools.

In secondary school they have in their performances a curriculum written for year 7 to 10 on aboriginal studies one day a week aboriginal studies in the class room and it is not an elective for the first two years it is compulsory to study. In year 7 how the school gets out of it is that they have to agree to put it in the curriculum if parents of aboriginal kids at that school say to the principal that under this curriculum relevant to this school we want to argue for support we will get whoever to come down and assist the teachers in presenting it to the kids because as Jackie was saying if it is in there that have a curriculum which is like you are doing a speech on aboriginal history.

They talk about the modern Shepparton and that, do you want a non-aboriginal teacher to teach the kids in the classroom or do you wan then to be supported by the community.

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Antoinette Gentile, CEO Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service , (VALS)

Catie Pitman, Community Legal Education, Research Planning & Development Section,

Antoinette Gentile: The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service employs 11 solicitors, 10 client service officers, a Research Planning and Development Section, and Finance Section. Our solicitors cover the whole state we operate as a 24 hour service.

Client Service Officers (CSO) – operate when a client is locked up CSO contacts police station to see what’s happened and tries to get to see the person or speak with them to ensure they have legal representations.

Community legal Education (CLE)- is about outreach in the community to ensure that people are aware of their issues under the law.

Catie Pitman: Our approach to CLE is a community development approach other ways to provide CLE. In brief VALS has been working at a community level much more effective way and for community to find their needs ways in which they can deal with the justice issues. VALS concentration has been in two areas Shepparton and Dandenong we will be getting more CLE meetings added in the community. We call them Community Justice forums people who are service providers have attended. This program has been operating for 18 months.

Issues recognised are kids, police attitudes towards kids, adults, discrimination, police use of discretionary powers, and how to make a complaint. Complaint’s in relation to discrimination and police. VALS CSO are also assisting people to fill our complaint forms. What type of information is required for making complaints photo’s, evidence, doctors report. VALS acts as intermediary on matters between police and the community. The community view is that it is not worth complaining it’s too hard when we do we have to face the person when lodging a complaint.

In Shepparton there is an agreement with local community and police remind them of clauses to contact the Community Justice Panel (CJP) rep. Client Service Officer meet regularly with police regularly along with CJP and a community rep, as a result of support from the local community . This is being looked at as a framework for other regions. The community rep acts as support to the process . We also focus on work in relation to Law Reform.

VALS has also released brochures’: Women’s Legal Business, Parents & Guardians: How to support your child at the police station and in court, Family Violence, and How to make a complaint.

Comment: Just on the how to appeal a decisions or complaint particularly in relation to centrelink decisions the impression is that if you put centrelink on it you did something wrong. Suggest –if you got a problem you can appeal it. Something we put in is that if you don't like a decision you can appeal it. It's not always a big problem. Customers think Centrelink don't always like to exercise their right to appeal a decision. For example I know of a client who we have had to get them to appeal decisions to get repayments made to them.

For a whole lot of reasons people do not like to appeal similar to other grievances the EOC discrimination, police behaviour, customer services. We need to encourage Aboriginal people to do this. There is history of 'don't like to complain there a feeling of not getting no where.' Is there support and assistance given to the person if they do want to appeal?

Comment: In our area we would walk them through the process which is three stages. Firstly, the person who made the decision chances of them overturning is slim because they made the decision secondly authorised review officer centrelink not involved in the process so they get to talk to parties based on the decision interpretation of the law. Now they may overturn the decision then it goes to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and that's an external decision. We have had to go as far as the review officer . We generally are present at the interview. It should be in across the state the clients are entitled to as for the ALO or ISO to be present at any interview. We offer to keep check to see how it went with clients. We continually enforce that they have that right to appeal a decision. Our biggest problem is they don't see it as in their best interest.

This is like a lot of situations not confined to centrelink. It is because of the historical view . In VALS case we face clients saying that it only means more harassment.

Comment: That's true they can harass that person or the family known to them. This is known to happen.

VALS Strategy is to act as a watch dog on police we are building a register of complaints against police. Who says that didn't happen , there are no witnesses for that, or that officer didn't do that. VALS are keeping a register to counter the claims . for example then someone says there is a lot in one area and the police say you can't substantiate any of that. We can say that there has been x amount of complaints.

Comments: We had incidents in Swan Hill with youth and police. Police pulling up young boys Friday and Saturday nights walking down the street. They would pull them over , they know them and where they live. The boys would be pulled up and the police would say see that shop window we could break that and say you broke that . The boys would say go ahead. So how can young people have respect for police like that and when they threaten them like that. When they drive past making hand gun signals. Now as a result of all this type of things the young people were putting up with . They called a community meeting of all judiciary workers and police . When

they came to the hand gun sign the police said that one of the constables has arthritis in his hand. It was a waste of time calling that meeting. The relationship is not great although RAJAC might change this.

Complaints being made whilst on criminal charges can jepordise your standing in court, complaints a VALS lawyer gives advice.

Comment: I would like to get some clarity about the VALS policy of Aboriginal client versus Aboriginal client policy?

AG: Before I came there was a policy we could not represent or brief cases out . Now the policy is first person approaches VALS we will get the assistance of a VALS solicitor, And the second will be referred our to legal aid if not appropriate we pay for a private solicitor or barrister for them So that the two parties are not left un represented, There are some exceptions to that rule if we have instructions form another party. We have to sometimes brief both parties out for legal reasons. When a solicitor has instructions for another person it is a conflict of interest.

Comment: What is the ratio of female clients?

AG: I could not tell you family law where we employ 3 ½ people is the biggest area for female client contact. Family Law involves residence, access and contact, VALS don't do property matters .

Comment: Is it means tested?

AG: No. Discrimination, and civil matters are referred to the Equal Opportunity Commission.

Comment: When VALS briefs a case out are the solicitors aware do they have a history of dealing with aboriginal clients?

AG: We have a listing of those solicitors and barristers who have an understanding of aboriginal culture . We will offer training –we will undertake this with any new barristers or solicitors listed.

Comment: Where is the Koorie Court Up to?

AG: This is part of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement. We are part of the committee. There is a review in progress and nothing has been set in concrete on this it is all in the consultation phases. Nothing has been decided on where it will go. Department of Justice are in charge of the project.

Gina Edwards, Indigenous Apprenticeship Adviser, Ariginisle Training Company

Ariginisle is a private company that is funded by the department of Education Training and Youth Affairs.

I have been in my role for three years as an Indigenous apprenticeship advisor, basically I work with registered training organisations, TAFE, ACFE, and neighbourhood houses. I also provide cultural advice on training programs and with group training companies in relation to apprentices or trainees I provide employers with a list of aboriginal consultants. I am based in Melbourne and cover the state and Tasmania. A lot of the work is advisory developing registered training programs for new apprenticeship centres.

New apprenticeship field officers forms now ask when they sign up new apprentices if they the apprentice is aboriginal. I ask on my visits do you sign up Koories? They react with no I don't think so I say. Are you sure because I am one. The question is framed as do you identify and they can tick the box. I advise new apprentice field officers of the employer programs available to assist such as Indigenous Employment Program, wage assistance program which pay's employee's \$4,400 to use for trainee equipment or to top up wages, or provide training assistance. We work with a register Ariginisle is a national company.

I liase with lots of job network members, employment agencies that do find work for Aboriginal people. We work with [Diveristy@work](#) (pamphlet available) they are funded to assist people in getting resumes together dealing with employers across the field directly . And to getting people into different fields. Traineeships target 15-24 year olds it is hard to get koorie people to apply. They do pre screen on employees interview tips, referral to employees take a support person to interview.

Ariginisle focus on support provided after you are registered at centrelink there are different types of Apprenticeships some can be modified to suit individual's needs.

Careers teachers at schools have assisted in developing school based apprenticeships in some regional areas, this where an apprentice can be at school 3 days and on the job 2 days. Tutorial assistance is provided under ATAS. Also we ensure that the training is accredited and nationally applicable. Ensure employers can provide the trainee with 4-6 hours top undertake study.

Tracey Evans, Education Officer, Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs

In my role within DETYA I cover the south eastern region from Dandenong to Hastings down to Seaford and the Rosebud area.

There are seven Indigenous Education Officers with DETYA who represent seven regional centres that include Mildura, Bairnsdale, Albury and four metropolitan officers.

Our job is to look after the Aboriginal Education Directors Assistance Programs - AEDAP, along with ATAS - the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme and also ASSPA - Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness program.

Under ATAS if you think you or a student has difficulty with subjects in further education perhaps you need access to tutor assistance. ATAS assists through the tutor register base all you have to do is register for tutorial assistance and we get back to you.

Whilst the ASSPA program provides an amount of \$110 per child at primary school no child owns the money. It is available to assist parents get involved in the school. how the money will be spent needs to be directed by the parents committee/network. An education officer (EO) is able to assist the process.

Question: We were discussing this earlier, how can a principal, a white man, decide how that ASSPA money can be spent when there are a group of aboriginal parents there who should have the right to spend the ASSPA money to best benefit their children.

That is why we always ask that if you are having a problem within the school system, with the principal or others distributing the money in the area. That it is important to actually let your education officer know what is going on. They can look into it and ask the questions and see how it is being handled. It is a program given to parents to get them actively involved within the school. An education officer can advise on the spending of ASSPA funds. Indigenous input on the principals negative behaviour is needed as parents loose interest in the program.

Comment: We have 41 aboriginal children attending a school and as a reward we wanted to take them on an outing. The principal said that we had to take the white children as well that's 82 children which is more money. Even though there was some unspent monies.

Education Officer works closely with ASSPA committees in making sure funds are spent the way parents want it distributed. Can you find out who the EO is and get them to contact me. EO needs to be made aware so we can deal with the issue.

Comment: How do you set up an ASSPA program?

ASSPA set up - you need to tell the principal about it and get him to fill out a form. Put them in touch with an EO. The EO is available to visit the school, meet and discuss how money can be spent within the program. What we want is for the parents to “take control” of programs such as ATAS and ASSPA and make them work for them and their children.

Comment: Can you set up an ASSPA with one child?

Yes, for primary school \$110 and \$160 secondary.

Also within the school environment are KEDO – Koorie Education Development Officers work they fall within the LAECG – local area education consultative group who are networking together to get some backing behind KEDO.

Comment: I understand and acknowledge what has been said. At Worawa Aboriginal College we have been told that we do not fit within this system . We wanted ASSPA and were told that we are outside the regional system – we have also had no KEDO support.

You should be within the region and your worker would be Earl Cleaver.

**Joanne Risely, Senior Policy Officer. Office of Women's Policy
Dept Premier and Cabinet**

I have been employed as a Koorie woman to get in there with the government and show or teach the government how to deal with Koorie women that is not a one-person job. The second half of this presentation is how I perceive doing that.

I am the only Koorie employed at premier and cabinet among 500 so you can imagine the load on my shoulders at the moment. I am implementing in the Office of Women's Policy - Valuing Victoria's Women.

VISION - OFFICE OF WOMENS POLICY (OWP)

The achievement of a society which values the diverse roles undertaken by women, and enables women to reach their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

KEY FOCUS OF OWP:

Women's Leadership Women's Safety Women and Community Strengthening Women and Work

ROLE OF OWP

To develop and inform government policies, practices and programs to continually improve the lives, and expand the choices of all women.

THE FORWARD PLAN

The OWP Forward Plan targets four key areas:

- Representation and equity
- Education, work and economic independence
- Health, well-being and community strengthening
- Justice and safety

REPRESENTATIVE AND EQUITY

The Bracks Government will ensure reconciliation is based on a genuine partnership with the community and will consult directly with Koorie women on issues effecting their families and communities

EDUCATION, WORK AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

DEET will conduct research into the needs of all potential users of Adult and Community Education and develop strategies to overcome barriers to participation and completion

Comment: So what happens if women from the community want to meet the Premier Steve Bracks in regard to these policies?

Daphne Yarram: Different government agencies are looking at setting up advisory bodies made up of Aboriginal people across the state they go through their said minister and they end up coming through the PAC which myself, Troy Austin and Marion Hansen sit on with Keith Hamilton and Steve Bracks. It's more of a lobbying information and resource sharing exercise than making decisions. Community usually makes decisions on the ground than up through the structure. When they get to us it is for us to ratify it not to say no it's no good. So all the work is actually done on the ground and as we meet we are supporting what's happening on the ground. Its not for us to make decisions up here by saying this is what we think this is how its going to come down to the community its all directed by the community and we are encouraging that.

Comment: I've been in Aboriginal politics for years as have a lot of the women here I genuinely know what you are saying. But hasn't it been exactly what we have been doing for years going through advisory we are always advising but when it comes to the nitty gritty is the Brack's government going to be any different than other past governments? You have Koorie people in these positions and then it becomes very frustrating because the Koorie people on the ground making decisions and recommendations to them (to you) are ratifying their decisions. But the ultimate decisions is held by the white government minister until they put into place within their own policy exactly what you are saying 3-5 years and I have the work we will consult. We are the most consulted people in the world I think it's time the Brack's government did get real and genuine about the indigenous people the first people of this land and talk about reconciliation. Do Aboriginal units within cabinet have the power to be able to do something I'm certainly one of these people who thinks advisory committee's are the best people to know.

What our community wants is information that is discussed here, it looks good in the book looks good to justify us being here but is' it going to happen? We are only going to change this through his minister directly consulting at a meeting like this and ministers coming to a community meeting. What we should be doing is pressuring the government to give real power to the people, to give some power of direct advice not through a boss to a boss then to the minister.

JR: Unfortunately for us that is the way that government works and one Koorie person going in there and trying to make a difference and what you touched on about

the minister actually talking to the community people in some sort of forum is one of the ideas that I actually had in consultation.

The Minister for Women's Affairs, Sheryl Garbutt, is looking for our direction because she is not an Aboriginal Affairs Minister so she is looking to have aboriginal people or Koorie women to get up there and have their say.

She wants to have this Koorie women's forum and has been pushing for it. Speaking on behalf of Sheryl Garbutt, Minister for Women's Affairs, I think she is open to that and everything that is put here. When I actually started in my position 3 months ago no one could tell me what I was there to do so I got this image that I was their as the tokenistic Aboriginal person in our office. So it was up to me to decide where my position was going to go, and how are we going to get Koorie women to prioritise their issues. The general thing with the government or other agencies is that Koorie women's issues are family violence and that is the only issue that we have. We had to set aside from that and say well we want Koorie women to prioritise what the issues are and that is where I'm coming from

Comment: We don't look at things specifically as domestic violence we look at things in a holistic way but given that you have only been in the position and that it is only a new position and the only aboriginal person in that area. Given the advisory committee that Daphne Yarram has just spoke about the PAC, Troy Austin, the ATSIC commissioner Marion Hansen and Premier Bracks there could be something to come from this forum to the PAC. If the women want that Koorie Women Mean Business may be able to through the advisory committee try and get a delegation of women and set up a meeting with the premier down the track. It's just a suggestion. It could be a recommendation Koorie Women Mean Business might take that up.

DY: Yes, we are the most consulted we are the most trained and at the end of the day somebody else makes the decision whether they like the recommendations or not. I think we have because of this governments shock of getting in labour and beating Kennett they made a big platform the recognition and respect policies that says whole and government approach to everything and setting up this advisory committee that sits at a table with Steve Bracks and Keith Hamilton and which has the ATSIC elected arm. He takes direction from that on everything that is put in front of him Bracks recognizes that. So I am hopeful that in forums like this when community women talk they are saying a part of what Joanna is talking about also that we are hoping to have an Indigenous women's forum that will have ministers sitting at the table listening to what the issues are collectively around the states.

The idea of having a delegation of Aboriginal women coming in to talk to a PAC meeting or to a meeting with Braces I think it is fantastic I really do. We were talking about earlier when Jackie was here about showing leadership. There are a few Aboriginal women, hi-profile women who are recognized around the place and we need to do those sorts of things to move not so much the cause along but to raise the profile to say just don't talk to the Aboriginal officers within our agencies you need to talk to the community as well. Don't limit yourself to a little bit of information make yourself open to a lot.

JR: I do believe a lot has happened since the Bracks government has come to office. The Liberal government were not open to a lot of things and you do have the PAC now, which didn't exist prior and have a direct line to the premier. This is very unusual then there is the reconciliation respect draft which is going around at the moment to the whole of government so they are recognizing that Koorie people will be able to get in there and have a say. They are actually very open to it where as in the past governments haven't been. So what we need to do is that doorway has been opened for us and like Daphne said yes how many times do we have to have a report written that is stuck on a shelf lets make this one work this time and it's not about consulting a lot of it is about negotiating now because the data is there the consulting has been done now its time to put strategies in place to make them work.

JUSTICE AND SAFETY

The Bracks Government will also work with Koorie women to develop a new approach to improving safety and social wellbeing in Koorie families and communities. A different approach that recognises the impact of colonisation and past policies.

Ministerial Advisory Committee and Koorie Women Going Places

I have developed an advisory committee and a network for Koorie women but I cannot announce that the minister has to announce that. But I can give you some more detail. My position was created to develop mechanisms for Koorie Women to negotiate and consult around women's issues with the government.

The remainder of my presentation is about the developing of an Indigenous lead approach for an informed government on Koorie Women's issues. In valuing Victoria's women with the forward plan 2000 - 2003 there is specific reference to initiatives for Koorie women and the intention by government to establish consultation with Koorie women.

Within that forward plan you will find that there is under those four things that I have already mentioned there is number of other things that the government has actually put up as their strategies to dealing with things in this group the strategies are sitting there. It lists what departments responsibilities to make sure that those initiatives happen that is where we come into it as well because we need to make sure that were they have made these promises we have to make sure that they happen because it's not good enough for them just to sit in a book.

Koorie women describe themselves as the life line of the community it's mother, grandmothers, aunts and daughters they are the mainstay of the family as elders it is proven that they play an important role as in advising and guiding younger family members and in maintenance of heritage and culture. Koorie women want greater involvement in negotiations on issues affecting their lives and a greater role in the decision-making. That is about where I'm coming from want to make it so those Koorie women have that power to make it happen that they prioritise the issues that affect them.

QUESTION: Is there any youth involvement on the Advisory committee?

There are actually two levels because there are so many women that want to be involved. It was originally going to be a small committee and then when they started talking to the people in the community and from working in the community myself I knew that it needed to be bigger and so the structure of the actual network. There is going to be a network of Koorie women who wants to be a part of that network can be a part of that network just by contacting myself and I have left my cards for people and I also go around to communities and let them know that it is happening and from that network their will be a ministerial advisory committee set up of around 20 members so what ever level you are on you will have an impact into making decisions. So it is certainly open to anyone young old.

I personally think that we have so much knowledge in our community and value from elders and people my age and people that have been in the political areas. That certainly in a lot of the areas that you have mentioned here is affecting the young ones and all the yelling in the world or all the advice in the world does not necessarily exactly see the future. Where we want the future to go will hopefully be in the same direction sometimes us older ones get a little more wax in our ears than is good for us its very important because they are our future. They are certainly my future and obviously I hope some young aboriginal activists I hope that some of them come out of the school that is why the girls are here for that reason I've got somebody who has got to care about me and their kids to keep our culture continuing but unless we start some of these young ones and getting them to sit on some of these committees and advisories how are they going to learn. I definitely agree it needs to be a real cross age thing.

The purpose of the network that we are trying to establish is to provide a conduit of Koorie Women from throughout the state to government. To hold a Koorie Women forum to identify priorities and concerns to women and their families and advise government on these matters. It is proposed that negotiations will engage representation from Koorie community women Koorie women from community-controlled organizations Koorie women within government Koorie people organization such as ATSIC Aboriginal Affairs. The suggestion was it wasn't about a group of people getting on to these groups it is about involving everyone contacting the organizations and asking them to nominate a rep and talking to community people and getting community people involved in the network also women's issue's groups. Previously in the past and coming from a community controlled background there was always a particular group of people that were involved in making the decisions for Aboriginal Affairs and it never seemed to get to that community level they never got that community input so my idea around having so many people involved and having a network underneath the advisory committee was for that reason. To make sure that there was community input directly in to the ministerial advisory committee. It will also be important for meetings to be held metropolitan and regional areas. The idea is to hold meetings in the regions and get the regional people involved.

PROPOSED KOORIE WOMENS FORUM

It is proposed that a Koorie Women's forum be held in September this year we aim to try to have numbers of around 200. It is looking good so far to have 200 women attend that forum. Applications for that will be sent to anyone that wants to be involved so please contact me about getting on the register for invitation. I can also send out information that comes through government as well. To do with the network ministerial advice minutes and you can get involved I want us to have our say.

It is proposed that Premier Steve Bracks attend the forum but we have not had any confirmation from his office as yet and definitely Keith Hamilton will be asked to attend. It will be a chance for Koorie women to have their opinion you will actually get a chance to talk directly to the ministers and pinpoint the under lying issues.

By the end of that forum we hope to have recommendations that will steer the network and ministerial advisory committee so as we will be able to prioritise what issues you want us to fight for.

If you really want to have your say come to this forum as you will be able to speak straight to the ministers and not have to go through sub committees. This forum is an initiative of the Bracks government

Question: Who set the limit of women to 200 who picked the figure?

The 200 is all the government will pay for this forum.

Comment: I thought it was going to be a community not the people money. Now we are told from the start that only 200 women can attend and they are going to make the selection.

They are not going to decide the participants at all that will be decided through the networking.

Comment: The same problems no matter what state the government says they will only pay for 200 women. If they are genuine I've got to hate the word reconciliation. I hate the word sorry and if they say sorry they think that it is all over its never going to be over. If they are genuine they should be saying to you go set up a 3 day workshop we want to hear as many women that want to come. We want to hear what they have to say that's being genuine what is happening is doing exactly my arguments that government sets up 200 women there is other women from all over so you have to get Aboriginal Organizations that will only invite their representatives it's a drop in the bucket we have been falling into their traps by saying what's going to happen if 205 want to come who is going to tell the other 5 women that they cant come because as a Koorie Women I would say "come on bub you can sleep in my room". But we shouldn't have to do that it's humiliating to us. Somebody needs to send something to the minister and say no. If you are genuine we can help let us help our own let us help you we want a conference that we invite its open an equal opportunity forum for our women. As a respected person I believe it

will be the elders but we should not forget the youth 3what we are really talking about is women taking control. Black strong women taking back control of our lives and until we do that until we are able to say no we don't want to be part of this type of forum unless everybody that wants to attend can.

I think that it would be a good idea to have a Young Women's Forum at the same time as the Koorie Women's Forum to give them a chance to voice their opinions among themselves have youth representatives from different areas that will get up and speak to the girls about their country and the differences.

This is why we want you all to register with the network because then you will be able to have your say on how the forum will be run and who will be eligible and what sort of issues and topics will be discussed at it. We need to try to bring that networking into the community.

Comment: As Co Founder of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service etc to me this is just another program with a different name to it. Whatever government basically what we are talking about is the picking of Aboriginal women's brains so the government can get advantage in dealing with issues relating to Aboriginal people. That's what it is all about they have Aboriginal Policy for committees setting up policies. I've been on those committees of policy for the government I've got a pretty good idea of the processes that are used to me all that is happening the people live in drains there is no real empowerment for the people to deal with it ourselves this is a recent phenomenon going back 10 years the governments whether they be state or federal are the people who are making up the decisions about us and our lifestyle. To me if they want to really empower the people our women our men then they should put us on the same level that they deal with the non indigenous women and that is giving them a platform and funding to operate in our own way as we see fit because this is all for the benefit of government and not the people.

The other argument is that we need to empower ourselves by allowing And being a part of this. What I would like to see and maybe that's a consideration Koorie Women Mean Business to be actually running a large big forum for us to run it the way we want to run it and if they are genuine the minister for health if he is really serious will be there to explain his policies and have the chance to get commitments off him and do it that way. I don't see why this group cant go back and say if he is genuine about reconciliation, If this government is genuine about consultation about hearing our voices they would actually put there money where their mouth is. Give it to Aboriginal Women to run their own conference and do it the way we want to do it and let us invite them not the other way around. They are only there because of our needs can we put to you to make a recommendation to your minister if she is funding 200 delegates put the money to Aboriginal Women to run the forum and hopefully these other groups somewhere I mean DEET, DEET has got money they should come forward also the health education all these departments who want to have our output should all contribute dollar for dollar and make this a forum for a couple of thousand Aboriginal women instead of only 200.

I think that the ministerial advisory committee can push that because the issues have been raised at this forum. With the network and the advisory committee we can push to try to get these things to happen.

QUESTION: What role will Koorie Women Mean Business play in this forum?

LM: We are actually represented on the ministerial advisory committee

Comment: I would like to see Koorie Women Mean Business take more of a high profile and take this away from the government the government has too much control over every thing.

LM: This is why we got Joanna here today so KWMB can actually say that this came out of this forum and this is our position on this committee as well as to also gauge other women's opinions to this proposal. One of the things is the document that Joanna worked with I haven't seen it and I don't have a lot of knowledge of it even when it came out in publication so I don't know how she finds working with it?

JR: Coming from a community background I'm learning a lot of processes and just the simple fact that I am at a Koorie women forum today and I couldn't actually spell out about the ministerial advisory committee.

Comment: I would like to see the agenda for this forum sent around to all the communities so as the items up for discussion can be discussed in the community first overall agreement from the women

These are things that will be put to the women's advisory committee. The committee is made up of all Koorie women the minister does not sit on it and that is why we want to get the network bigger. People involved in the network so far are people from the community there is no MPs making the decisions it's about setting the agenda and saying what we want to do it is about time that we ran the show the only things I have been told about the forum is the number of people to attend we have not been told about the issues to be discussed or any thing like that that will be up to the committee.

