

20 August 2008

Queensland Government ‘rubs salt in the wounds’ of Indigenous workers

The revised Queensland Government offer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stolen wages claimants announced last week falls far short of what is needed to resolve the issue, according to Indigenous rights organisation, ANTaR.

ANTaR Queensland President, Monique Bond said she was disgusted by the way the Queensland Government continued to neglect some of its most vulnerable elderly citizens.

“The Government continues to insist it knows what’s best for Aboriginal people, rather than listening to what those people affected by stolen wages want done with their money,” Ms Bond said.

Ms Bond said that stolen wages claimants had told ANTaR that they wanted the remaining \$35 million of the Queensland Government allocation to be paid out:

- to existing successful claimants
- to unsuccessful claimants who can meet a lower level of proof, based on the NSW model; and
- to new successful claimants

Ms Bond said that any remaining money should be distributed amongst claimants, not to the Indigenous Queenslanders’ Fund proposed by the Government.

“The Bligh Government continues to rub salt into the wounds of stolen wages claimants and their extended families,” Ms Bond said.

“The Government consults but they have already decided what to do. This is a disgrace. It raises hopes of a genuine dialogue only to have these hopes dashed again and again.”

Ms Bond said ANTaR would continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Queensland Council of Unions and the many thousands of non-Indigenous Queenslanders committed to justice to secure a just outcome for stolen wages claimants.

The Queensland Government controlled wages, savings and benefits belonging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for most of the 20th century. The existing allocation of \$55.6 million is around one ninth of the monies that historians consider was withheld from Queensland Indigenous workers.

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