MEDIA STATEMENT

Friday, 20 January 2012

NSW GOVERNMENT WELCOMES EXPERT PANEL REPORT

The NSW Government warmly welcomes the report by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

The report flows from extensive and dedicated work on the part of the Panel and its members, and we particularly commend the Panel for the positive dialogue it has had with a very wide range of Australians of many different backgrounds.

With the NSW Liberals' and Nationals' support, the NSW Constitution was amended in 2010 to acknowledge Aboriginal people as the State’s first people. The NSW Government is therefore open to national constitutional reform proposals.

The NSW Government will now give the detail of the Panel's report and its recommendations every consideration.

As per those recommendations, the NSW Government offers its cooperation to the Commonwealth Government, as well as to the Federal Opposition, about the process, timing and content of a future constitutional referendum. We look forward to a clear direction from the Commonwealth Government and positive and hopeful dialogue between all parties.

In this context, we will work toward a referendum that best recognises our first peoples, best supports mutual respect and national unity, and best promotes equality in Aboriginal people’s opportunities in our society.

We strongly recognise that those opportunities are linked to the vital role played by Aboriginal cultures and languages in shaping proud and productive lives.

In line with the Expert Panel's inclusive approach and our own commitment to genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities, such as the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs, we equally look forward to hearing the views of NSW-based Aboriginal and other stakeholders about the best ways to achieve recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution.

ENDS.