

2004.3. Aboriginal **Justice Agreement (Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Victoria)**

Submitted 21 June 2004 to the Department of Justice, Victoria.

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To the Victorian Justice Department on **Aboriginal Deaths in Custody**, we made the following points:

- * The terms of reference indicate a further welcome shift from the previous policies of paternalism and assimilation towards self-determination and co-operative decision making.
 - * We believe the difficulties of aligning diversity with justice can be overcome.
 - * We support the concept of Koori Courts where justice can be administered with cultural understanding and wisdom.
 - * We regard the educational disadvantage of Kooris as a major cause of their over-representation in the criminal justice system.
 - * We expressed the view that the Worawa Aboriginal College has an impressive curriculum and range of programs which deal with youth problems.
 - * Indigenous ill health and deaths in custody are closely linked. Given that cultural values and beliefs play an important role in successful therapy, we suggested that careers for indigenous care givers — doctors, nurses, psychiatrists — be encouraged through the provision of scholarships and reserved places in tertiary courses.
 - * To increase the economic opportunities of indigenous Australians' enterprises structured as co-operatives would, we believe, better reflect the ethos of sharing inherent in Aboriginal culture.
 - * A Bill of Rights, preferably in the Australian, rather than a State, Constitution, would aid in the full implementation of all recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and might significantly reduce the prejudice, racism and social marginalisation still experienced by many indigenous people.
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