

26 Stanley Street,  
Northcote,

Vic.

21/9/92

The Editor,  
"The Age"  
Spencer Street,  
Melbourne, Vic. 3000  
Dear Sir/Madam,

At last! Peter Hollingworth is one of the first eminent non-Koori Australians to publicly pinpoint ("Age" 21/9/92) one of the most important issues confronting Koori Australians.

Hopefully Mr Hollingsworth's position and status as "Australian of the Year" will prompt the media, for a change, to take seriously claims of maladministration of Aboriginal monies.

In the past when Koori community activists made similar serious allegations regarding the scandalous manner in which large sums of taxpayers money are administered by an army of state and federal public servants, we have been countered and smugly dismissed by superscillious mandarins and politicians who trot out their "own" Aboriginal representatives to claim the activists are "radical's" and "stirrer's". Of course they neglect to mention that these Koori supporters of Govt policy are invariably public servants whose salaries and expenses would seem astronomical to the average Australian worker (eg Lois Odonohue, non-elected, ministerially appointed Chairperson of ATSIC recieves in excess of \$150,000 P.A.)

The point is however, that for twenty years enormous sums of money (this year \$800m) has been spent on Aboriginal affairs to little or no effect!

The Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody not only found that for the vast majority of Koori people little had changed in twenty years, but also strongly suggested that the manner in which government funding is administered and dispensed by a myriad of government agencies is a primary factor in the on-going failure of Koori communities to achieve genuine economic independence and self-determination. These two immediate goals are the minimum we must attain if we, as Koori people, are to then begin our own long term process of rehabilitation and reconstruction necessary after our 200 year holocaust.

To continue present policies which keep Koori people trapped in a web of dependance on government agencies will continue to deprive an already ravaged, refugee people of their self-respect, which in turn will continue to have a dramatic effect on family, social, economic and legal problems which today

effect on family, social, economic and legal problems which today often overwhelms, frustrates and complicates efforts to establish and consolidate genuine community-controlled, self-help programmes.

Add to this disastrous recipe of misguided, racist and out-dated policies, the political machinations of politicians and senior public servants who preside over the cauldron of vested interests, conflicting interests, overt and covert corruption and nepotism that is the billion dollar a year Aboriginal affairs industry (possibly the biggest employer of non-Koori people in Australia). The people who control the unscrutinised public service empires use the expensive hired guns of the St. Kilda Rd and Paddington advertising agencies to write reassuring speeches which are read by their well paid, well groomed "acceptable" Aboriginal "representatives" in such forums as the National Press Club.

Thus the Australian public has been gently conditioned into blissful ignorance and apathy from which some occasionally stir to accuse Koori's of wasting the money and being responsible for their own circumstances. The old "blame the victim" syndrome.

If racism is born of fear and ignorance, then the Australian media have had a complicity in the two decade conspiracy to keep Australians fearful and ignorant of Koori peoples just and reasonable claims. That's why I hope Peter Hollingworth's statements lead to more serious scrutiny of the matters he raised.

Besides, a serious independent analysis of the problems mentioned by Hollingworth would help to balance some of the ATSIC public relations pieces by Cameron Forbes in recent times, and would do a great deal more in leading your readers to the real issues.

Thank you,

**GARY FOLEY**  
Pensioner, Northcote.