

Sam's speech notes for Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly Regional Partnership Agreement RPA signing 28TH Jan 09

Acknowledgements to country, to wiradjuri nation, John Hill's welcome, Hon. Ministers Jenny Macklin and Paul Lynch, MPRA members, invited guests

What an occasion this is

It's so special,,,,,the enormity of this occasion is for some,,,certainly an emotional one,,,,,for others,,,,,the moment defies description

Upfront,,,,,Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly welcomes and applauds the commitment by both Ministers Macklin and Lynch on behalf of the Australian and NSW State Government,,,,,the commitment to work with greater collaboration,,,,, in partnership with Aboriginal people,,,,,

Its simple,,,,,its not complicated

Today is such an historic event,,,,,, it's the most important historic chapter in the development process of Aboriginal people in the Murdi Paaki region.

The demonstration of legitimate and credible governance is finally recognised,,,,, recognised as the framework for community engagement and participation..... recognised as a key component of development in our region,,, recognised as the underlying element contributing to improved quality of life

The Murdi Paaki region has,, for the best part of two decades.... pursued an unending commitment to improve the overall well being of its communities across all social aspects of society,,,and it did this in a couple of ways

One—by successfully making the former ATSIC legislation work, for the benefit of its residents

And secondly by fostering and enhancing,,, a productive and active relationship with governments of all levels

Well before the abolition of ATSIC , the Murdi Paaki Regional Council developed community and regional governance models as exciting new agendas,,,,,, the new agendas provided new vehicles of capacity development for Aboriginal people,,, internally within their own communities and externally across the region,,,,,

I think its necessary to highlight that those models still exist and continue to grow stronger as time goes by,,,,,, the model has been across three federal governments,,,,,, and is well placed to be around for a good number of years to come yet

Over the past 5 years, the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly has continued on that unending commitment well before,, and since,,,,, that most unfortunate political disaster to abolish ATSIC and Regional Councils,,,,,,

Some might say “oh not ATSIC again”,,,or “no no Sam,,,please don't talk about ATSIC”,,,,, but let me put a couple of things for you all to think about,,,,,

the governance model of the Murdi Paaki region is a product of ATSIC,,,,,,

our leadership,,,both individually and collectively,,,is a product of ATSIC

our relationships and partnerships are a product of ATSIC,,,,,,

It wasn't all as disasterous as some would like you to believe

It is certainly somewhat,, a blessing,, that the new thinking and actions of the nations politic today,,,,, are not that,,,,,of just a few years ago.

That new thinking is being demonstrated by the recent announcements made by Minister Macklin,,,,,to progress the discussions to establish a national body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

That new thinking is also here today ,,,,its here in this room,,

Today's signing does a couple of important things for the Regional Assembly

It rewards us for the contribution we have made and continue to make to improving the social and emotional well being of our people in the most socio-economic disadvantaged areas in NSW,,,,,,

It rewards us for our persistence to see realised,,,,a partnership between Aboriginal people , the Australian and NSW Governments,,,to continue that ever important relationship

And most importantly,, it recognises the Murdi Paaki Region and our belief of good governance ethics,,,,,,our belief in the legitimacy and leadership of community and regional governance,,,,,,and its empowering expression that tasks us with responsibility.

I want to commend the logic demonstrated by Ministers Macklin and Lynch, in finalising a very lengthy process,,,,,,

this now allows for greater co-ordination and collaboration across government,,,,, to work in partnership with Aboriginal people,, delivering services across the Murdi Paaki region,,,,,, work in partnership,,,,,empowering Aboriginal people through the promotion of governance and leadership but most importantly,,,,,in partnership to close the gap in the quality of life.

The Regional Assembly believes this agreement is also a very necessary step forward in making its contribution to establishing the process,, to rebuild a national governance model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I would like to impress on both Ministers, that the region has settled its governance model ,,,,,,and we are well placed to ease into any national model,,,,, no matter what shape or form it takes on

The pinnacle governance aspiration that still alludes us ,,,is that of a Regional Authority with statutory functions in commonwealth legislation

The Regional Assembly meeting in December, mapped out a timetable to capture the implementation process of the agreement,,,,,,,,,

We also discussed other important aspects of widening the parameters of participation in the Assembly by discussing the inclusion of the young leaders coming through the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Young Leaders program, inclusion of the elected NSWALC Councillors of the West and North West Zones and the possibility of other peak groups throughout the region,,,,,,,,,mind you it was just a discussion

The need to engage Local Government is becoming more crucial as time moves on,,,,,,,,, The trends emerging in the regions demographics,,,,,,,,,are telling us that the non-aboriginal population is decreasing,,,,,,,,,while Aboriginal populations are increasing in rapid amounts,,,,, As we think about 10-15-20 years down the track,,,,,,,,,Local Government will not look the same as it does now,,,,,, if those trends continue,,,,,our communities will become increasingly indiginised,,,,, we have to have confidence that Local Government can continue to deliver Local government services to a predominately Aboriginal population,,,,,,,,,

There is a subtle message in that,,,,,,,,,we have to become more participatory in Local Government,,,,,,,,,,,,,today's agreement provides the impetus to do so

Just discussing those things,,,,, identifies that,,,,,underlying spirit of partnership and participation,,,,, that the Murdi Paaki region has made its own signature,,,,,,,,,,,,,what would a partnership be without participation,,,,,,,,,,,,, there can be,,no partnership without participation

There are equally other significantly important matters to mention,,,,,

corporate governance development was also part of that era of governance modelling back in the mid 1990's,,,,,

To the Board of Directors and Staff of Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise ,, Murdi Paaki Regional Housing and Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Corporation,,,,..

Over the last year,,,,,you met the call to assist when government assistance ceased,,,,,,,,,,,,, I think it's fair to say, we would not be at this point, if it wasn't for the moral and financial support that you have provided to the Assembly,,,,,,and for that,,,,, we are most grateful.

Finally I wish to applaud the efforts of key agency staff from FaHCSIA, DAA and the former Lead Agencies of the COAG Trial,,,,, [Jody Broun](#), [Jeff Harmer](#), [Lisa Paul](#), [Wendy Jarvie](#), [Mark DeWeerd](#), [Louise Bye](#), [Anjali Palmer](#), [James McCormack](#), [Sue Finnigan](#) and of late [Tom Warren](#), thank you for your work and to see this agreement realised.....

And of course the members of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly,,and Aboriginal people across the region,,,,,, thank you for your persistence,,,,,

thank you for continuing to believe,,,,,,,,,,,,,