

# **National Centre for Indigenous Studies**

## **Speech by Professor Mick Dodson**

### **Wednesday 4 May 2005: National Europe Centre**

Vice Chancellor, thank you very much indeed for your words of welcome. It is true that we have been much involved with your Dialogues' initiative since the first such occasion, in 2003. I thank you for your Initiative in establishing the Dialogues and for your continuing encouragement. I thank also the National Europe Centre for hosting this event.

On the occasion of the first ANU Dialogue in 2003 the Australian National University Institute for Indigenous Australia presented a discussion on Australia's Indigenous People. At the second, held in April last year, two Maori speakers discussed the history of public policy relating to Maori, and the tension between Indigenous Rights and Human Rights.

This year I am delighted to welcome, in our continuing discussion in the series Indigenous Peoples of the World, two very distinguished representatives of the Saami people. First to speak will be Mr Pekka Aikio. Mr Aikio has been president of the Saami Parliament in Finland since 1996, and a member of the Saami Parliament since 1976. Mr Aikio comes from a family of traditional reindeer herders. Since obtaining a degree in zoology, Mr Aikio has worked and written extensively on reindeer herding and Saami culture and has held a number of posts in these fields. Among his many other accomplishments, Mr Aikio has Chaired the International Scientific Advisory Board for the Institute of the Environmental and Minority Law, The University of Lapland at Rovaniemi.

Our second speaker is Mr Jan Henry Keskitalo. Mr Keskitalo is Director of Saami Special Education Support, which is a nationwide service organised as a department of Saami University College, Norway. He holds the position of Chair of the Board of the Resource

Centre for Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was funded by the Norwegian government as a professionally independent institution. Mr Keskitalo is a Governor of the University of the Arctic, a network of 72 circumpolar Universities and University Colleges.

Indigenous higher education, land rights, language rights, minority rights, Indigenous governance and support of Indigenous rights generally by the national government are themes that are very familiar to us Indigenous people of Australia.

It's saddening to know how many other Indigenous peoples of the world suffer similar difficulties. It's encouraging to understand how freely we are exchanging information and listening to each other in serious dialogue. It's enlightening to learn about the successes and failures of the Saami people in persuading their various national governments to face up to the responsibilities of national Indigenous minorities within their borders. And it's exciting to know the strength and determination of the Saami in meeting each setback, and going on to further success.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, I now invite you to listen to the addresses of Mr Aikio and Mr Keskitalo.