

***Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté  
Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad  
Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit***

**Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO**

**Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF**  
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4 February 2008

Hon Jenny Macklin MP  
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

We are writing to congratulate you on being assigned the Ministry for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in the new government.

Unfortunately, there has been much damage done by the Howard Government over eleven years that will take some time and commitment by the new government to reverse; particularly in its policies directed at women, children, parents, pensioners, and Indigenous Australians.

Attached is our statement produced for Survival Day (26 January 2008) which highlights, as we see them, the priority areas in Indigenous Affairs. In this statement, we welcomed your promise of an apology and willingness to consult with Indigenous Australians on the form of words. As you have said in the media release on this topic, a relationship of respect is fundamental to addressing indigenous disadvantage and to Australia moving forward towards reconciliation.

We welcome the government's announcement last month of an additional \$64.6 million to housing in the Northern Territory in the 2007-08 financial year, its "\$261 million investment in improving Indigenous kids' health and early development" and the "extra \$15 million towards counselling and helping the Stolen Generations reconnect with loved ones".

In our statement, we expressed relief at your decision not to abolish the permit system in the Northern Territory. We also said that we consider that the promised review of the former Government's Intervention in the Northern Territory policies needs to be brought forward as these policies are doing more harm than good for Indigenous Australians. Close monitoring and consultation on these policies is not, in our view, enough.

We ask that you consider a further issue raised in our statement, the re-establishment of a body such as ATSIC, with representation at local, state and national levels, as we think that given the wide variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this country and the uneven playing field that has resulted from their dispossession, such a body is necessary to promote active citizenship, self-determination and to signal the new relationship of respect.

We look forward to progress on these important issues over the coming year.

Once again, our best wishes for your appointment as Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell  
Joint National Coordinators

Encl.: Survival Day 2008 Statement from WILPF (Australia)