

Over 200 Migrants to Receive Aboriginal Passports



***** For Immediate Release *****

A Welcome to Aboriginal Land Passport Ceremony will take place on 15 September 2012, at the Redfern Community Centre on the Traditional Lands of the Gadigal people.

Over 200 people, including newly arrived asylum seekers will receive an Aboriginal Passport which will be issued by Robbie Thorpe of the Treaty Republic and Ray Jackson, President of the Indigenous Social Justice Association. Mamdouh Habib, an Australian citizen detained in Guantanamo Bay, who had his Australian passport revoked by officials on returning to Australia, will also attend and address the Ceremony.

Ray Jackson says that “the issuing of the Passports cover two important areas of interactions between the Traditional Owners of the Lands and migrants, asylum seekers and other non-Aboriginal citizens of this country. Whilst they acknowledge our rights to all the Aboriginal Nations of Australia we reciprocate by welcoming them into our Nations. It is a moral win-win for all involved in the process”.

The Aboriginal Passport was first introduced in 1988 by Palawa (Tasmanian) activist Michael Mansell and was issued to an Aboriginal delegation that visited Libya in 1988.

This campaign, including the Ceremony, was inspired by the issuing of the Passports to Tamil asylum seekers detained indefinitely in Australia. Sydney-based activists seeking Aboriginal Passports then approached Jackson and Thorpe, with the intention of obtaining a Passport for themselves. Together they developed the idea of a Ceremony, opening up the invitation to migrants across Sydney. They have since been inundated with requests from those wishing to attend the Ceremony.

“There are a growing number of us [migrants] that recognise that we are the beneficiaries of a great injustice inflicted on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Having learned the true history of this land and to witness the unabated land theft and violence directed at the ATSI Peoples, we feel compelled to do and say something”, said Rihab Charida, Palestinian activist.

Organisers say the Ceremony is the start of what they see as an important alliance between migrants and the First Peoples of this land.

“I believe the Ceremony will become a National event as other Aboriginal Nations see the value of it and hold similar events around the country”, said Ray Jackson.

“The picture that the government paints is that Australia is the “lucky country”. But when we look at the Apartheid being practiced in the Northern Territory and the number of Black Deaths in Custody, among hundreds of other injustices aimed solely at the ATSI peoples, we know that that picture couldn’t be further from the truth. As the beneficiaries of these injustices, this event is a chance for us to express that we do not recognise Australia’s legitimacy as a sovereign power of this land and that it does not act in our name”, says Rihab Charida.

Passports will be granted after the signing of the Pledge, a passport photo presented and the payment of \$10 to assist in covering costs. Pledge attached.

Where: Redfern Community Centre 29-53 Hugo Street (The Block)

When: 15 September, 2012 starting at 11am.

Entertainment and food provided (donations accepted)

Contacts: Ray Jackson 0450 651 063 or Rihab Charida 0405 760 929