

## **Speech by ILC Chairperson Shirley McPherson at the official opening of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, Redfern, NSW, Friday, February 26 2010**

The Governor Marie Bashir, the Prime Minister the Honourable Kevin Rudd, The NSW Premier Kristina Keneally, Federal Cabinet Ministers, Elders, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen and Children, I wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land - the Gadigal, members of the Eora Nation.

The Indigenous Land Corporation has a clear mission, mandated by the Parliament of Australia in its response to the Mabo decision, to assist Indigenous people to acquire land so they can derive social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.

Hence, our motto - *Land, People, Opportunity*.

The ILC Board has always been mindful to strike a balance by acquiring land, not only in rural and remote areas, but also creating opportunity in urban areas where most of our Indigenous people live today.

In its acquisitions, the ILC has always wanted to ensure that young Indigenous people – our future – also benefit from land purchases.

So it was in 2006, when the possibility came along to buy the former Redfern School in the middle of Sydney, the ILC leapt at the chance to create a vibrant, important and lasting national centre that could change the lives of our young people and help them to reach their full potential.

The idea of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence was born and you see the result here before you today.

It has been a big journey to get here.

We had help along the way from some fantastic people who went the extra mile with us and dreamed the same dream of up to at least 5,000 Indigenous young people travelling from around Australia each year to learn, grow, lead and excel at the NCIE.

It is impossible to thank everyone, but I would like to name a few people who played key roles.

Firstly, a special thanks goes to Frank Sartor and Robert Domm, respectively the then Minister and CEO of the Redfern Waterloo Authority. Without their passion and drive for the ILC's dream it would not have been possible for the ILC to purchase the Redfern School site.

I would like to thank Brian Zulaikha and his team from Tonkin, Zulaikha and Greer Architects, together with St Hillers builders and project managers Coffeys, for their magnificent design and work which has seen an old school reborn for a new generation, not only from Redfern, but from around Australia.

Thank you also to my fellow ILC and NCIE Board Members - past and present - the YMCA and our founding program partners - Lloyd McDermott, NASCAR and the Exodus Foundation - for their support, encouragement and help in garnering widespread support from the government, business and community sectors, so the NCIE can grow and prosper.

Also, thanks to Jenny Macklin, who turned the first sod, Tania Plibersek and Kristina Keneally the respective Federal and State members, who have all been strong supporters of the NCIE.

Thanks to the building contractors, the workers, the Indigenous trainees and our own staff Ashley Martens, Kate Alderton and Richard Larkins who worked so hard to get the Centre finished on time and on budget.

NCIE CEO Jason Glanville and Centre Manager, James Ellender and their staff – to all of you sincere thanks – it has been a challenging, fantastic and sometimes tiring and frustrating journey, but now we can celebrate a major milestone for Indigenous Australia.

Lastly, I wish to thank two people who have made the NCIE a reality - it is ironic that both are overseas and unable to be here today – David Baffsky and David Galvin, respectively an ILC Board Member and ILC CEO. Without their vision, drive and passion for this Centre, we would not be here today.

As the Chairperson of the Indigenous Land Corporation it is now my great honour to introduce the Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Kevin Rudd MP, to officially open the National Indigenous Centre of Excellence.

Please welcome the Prime Minister. Thank you.