



IBA manager signs off - and lets fly



ONE of the few Indigenous people to have lead a national body charged with improving the prosperity and circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians has retired.

Ron Morony was General Manager of Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) for almost 13 years but, after helping to grow the statutory authority's capital base from \$40 million to include an investment portfolio worth \$320 million, he left the organisation on 10 April.

And after nearly 35 years in Indigenous affairs, he fired something of a salvo at governments – saying he was appalled at what he saw as a current lack of 'real engagement' with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"The feedback from large numbers of our people is one of frustration and despair with the ongoing rhetoric which doesn't match the real situation on the ground," Mr Morony said.

But the Arrernte man from Alice Springs said that, despite some worrying aspects of the future of Indigenous development, he still felt positive. He said he had been heartened to meet younger Indigenous men and women 'taking a leadership role and learning to engage with governments and the private sector in a business like manner'.

"My time at IBA has been a way of developing practical and real solutions for those Indigenous Australians who choose to be a part of the mainstream economy," Mr Morony said.

"I have enjoyed considerable support from the private sector and I think a lot of

ground work has been laid now for our people to think beyond government handouts and begin the journey to economic self-sufficiency."

Mr Morony said that when he first joined IBA, its financial affairs were not healthy and the Federal Government was ready to close it down.

"The board and I sought agreement to refocus the corporation by applying stronger commercial discipline and a renewed focus on creating wealth with the support of the private sector," he said.

As well as growing its capital base considerably, IBA had assisted many Indigenous corporations to secure investments and assets, he said.

Mr Morony nominated involvement in the development of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) in the late 1980s – 'an all-encompassing economic policy' that was 'perhaps ahead of its time' – as amongst his most memorable career highlights.

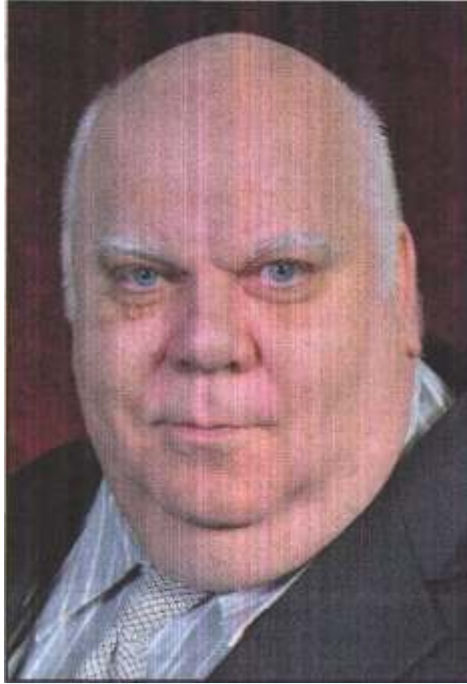
"I can recall a lot of resistance by many government agencies at the Federal and State levels as the tendency by governments and support agencies was to offer welfare solutions as opposed to developing and encouraging our people to look to the mainstream economy as a way of improving their lives," he said. However, fortunately, the policy received significant support from the government of the day and strong input from the then Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training and the former head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the late Charles Perkins.

Mr Morony thanked the people who



supported him over the years and told *The Koori Mail* that he would continue to contribute to the development of Indigenous Australians.

– By **KIRSTIE PARKER**



Newly-retired IBA chief Ron Morony.