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Blacks hit at probe delay

POLICE were sitting on a report alleging harassment of Aboriginals, an Aboriginal spokesman said yesterday.

Mr Gary Foley, a director of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, said he was still waiting to hear the results of a police probe into complaints made by him and the service chairman Mr Bruce McGuinness, last February.

Mr Foley said he had been interviewed by the man in charge of the investigation, Inspector Maurice Lindsay, of Prahran police, in February, but had heard nothing since.

Insp. Lindsay said yesterday the report was a matter for the Police Department. Its release "had nothing to do with anyone else."

A spokesman for the Police Minister, Mr Thompson, said the delay was due to the "enormous problem" police had in finding Mr McGuinness and interviewing him.

Mr McGuinness was not interviewed over his complaint until June 2, the spokesman said.

"Apparently, investigations have now been completed and will be

released to BII," (the police internal investigation branch).

The spokesman said 23 complaints had been made by Fitzroy and Collingwood Aboriginals. Investigations had been completed on nine, while others had been delayed because complainants had taken court action. A BII spokesman said details would be released as soon as the report was available.

Mr Thompson's spokesman said no ministerial comment would be made on the report because of pending court actions.

Mr Foley's complaint centred around incidents at the Grace Darling Hotel, Collingwood, on February 14.

He said a policeman had arrested him and then changed his mind, saying he was not under arrest.

He said he was then re-arrested when 14 police arrived and accused him of a burglary earlier that week.

He said he was abused, physically assaulted and

threatened before he was released.

Mr McGuinness claims to have been refused service at another Collingwood hotel, on the grounds "that the owner had been instructed by the police not to allow him on the premises."

He has accused police of harassing Aboriginals by indiscriminate stopping and questioning in the street.