

Indigenous advisory body dismissed

By Tom McIlroy

The Age

3 February 2017

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has dismissed the body established by Tony Abbott to advise on Indigenous issues, as part of a plan to appoint new members and replace outspoken chairman Warren Mundine.

The government's 12-person Indigenous Advisory Council was established after the Coalition's 2013 election win, headed by the former Labor Party national president and providing advice on a range of Indigenous issues and practical changes to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

In December, the government extended the appointment of Mr Mundine and other council members by one month to January 31, but the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet said this week all further meetings and council activities had been cancelled.

Cabinet is expected to approve nominations for a new council chairman and members as soon as next week.

Mr Mundine has openly criticised the government on a range of issues, including the establishment of an inquiry into Indigenous incarceration rates last year.

He said the existing council had been left over from the Abbott government and Mr Turnbull wanted to appoint his own members and "put his stamp on it".

"As our term was put until the 31st of January, that's now gone and so we're out of a job," he told Sky News.

"The move forward now is for the Prime Minister to work through the cabinet process to decide what he's going to do.

"On a professional level I don't have a problem with it, we were there for the Prime Minister's beck and call and he will move forward now."

Mr Mundine said the government should appoint a minister for Indigenous economic issues to help improve the socio-economic standing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

A spokeswoman for Mr Turnbull said new appointments were expected soon.