SHARED EXPERIENCES : COMMON SOLUTIONS

“Finding new ways to address indigenous disadvantage has been one of the surprise benefits of my time in Taiwan,” says Terry Mills, Deputy Opposition Leader.

Taiwan’s indigenous population is over 400,000 which is 2% of the total population; a similar ratio to Australia and Canada.

The first nations of Taiwan have a lot in common with aboriginal peoples in countries such as Australia, Canada, the USA and New Zealand.

They share lower life expectancy, lower education standards, lower income, lower quality of life and higher rates of imprisonment.

“As with elsewhere, these problems are linked to the loss of customary aboriginal land rights, loss of language, loss of culture, loss of traditional social structures and indigenous knowledge systems,” says Mr Mills.

“Taiwan has developed a Council of Indigenous Peoples to help formulate strategies to overcome the disadvantage suffered by its first nations.

“I believe we can learn from the Council and the Taiwanese in turn have expressed a strong interest to learn from efforts underway in the Territory to combat indigenous disadvantage.

“To get the best outcome, formal links between the Council of Indigenous Peoples and the Charles Darwin University should be established. Taiwan’s Fu Jen University, an institution specialising in indigenous learning, has confirmed their support for this proposed framework.

“My discussions with the Chief Secretary of the Executive Council of Indigenous Peoples, Lin Chiangi, confirmed his desire to work closely with the Northern Territory and Charles Darwin University.

“An invitation was extended and accepted to build on the short visit by Council executive members to Darwin in 2006.”

Further comment: Terry Mills 0418 833 594