

NACC will not alter its constitution

The National Aboriginal Consultative Committee has decided not to amend its constitution as previously agreed with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh, apparently because it feels that press reports of this week's NACC meeting have presented them as "caving in" to the Minister.

And the Minister, who had previously indicated that he accepted the constitution, except for a section dealing with the creation of an Aboriginal council of ministers, said in Adelaide last night that he would submit it to Cabinet, but in its present form would not support it.

NACC members are believed to have been irked by suggestions that their meeting with Senator Cavanagh, which was conducted with a good deal of compromise and flexibility on each side, represented only compromise from their, and so decided not to agree to the Minister's suggested amendments.

On Wednesday, the spokesman of the NACC, Mr Bruce McGuinness, said that the proposed council

of ministers themselves agreed with Senator Cavanagh's criticism — that the constitution would put too much power into the hands of the ministers at the expense of the 41 elected delegates.

He indicated then that the constitution would be redrafted to remedy the defect, especially as Senator Cavanagh had indicated that he accepted the more controversial sections of the constitution, which includes a name change, the power of the body to spend its own funds, and their right to consider itself more a congress of Aborigines rather than an adviser to the Government.

Yesterday, however, he announced that the committee had rejected changes, saying that the Minister and the NACC were in basic disagreement, and that the NACC considered it was being played with for political reasons.

"On this week's press reports of the NACC meeting, everyone thought the NACC had backed down", he said.

"Today it was quite clear the NACC feels it is our constitution and we will not react to his criticisms".