

Aboriginal affairs

Backdown in dispute

CANBERRA. — The National Aboriginal Congress yesterday backed down in its dispute with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Senator Cavanagh).

The congress agreed to return to its advisory role on aboriginal affairs following a special meeting with Senator Cavanagh.

The agreement means that the 41 members of the body will not lose their \$6,000 pay plus allowances.

A member of the aboriginal deputation which attended the talks Mr B. McGuinness (34), of Mel-

bourne, said last night: "We accept our responsibility to the Government."

Last Friday, Senator Cavanagh said he had no authority from Cabinet to pay members of the congress after their decision to change their name from the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee to the National Aboriginal Congress.

The congress also decided

to change its functions from being an adviser to demand a more direct say in aboriginal affairs.

It called for complete control over the \$117 million budget allocated to the Aboriginal Affairs Department.

Senator Cavanagh accused the body of having never fulfilled their advisory role.

He told yesterday's deputation from the congress that an urgent check with the Treasury and Attorney-General's Department had confirmed that he had no authority to pay the body if it insisted that the consultative committee did not exist.

However, despite the deputation's decision that the congress would revert to its advisory role as the consultative committee, it will continue as the congress until the new constitution is finished.

The constitution will be presented to Senator Cavanagh at a meeting in April, when a final decision on the future of the congress will be made.

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