

The Secretary

Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and the External Territories.

Inquiry into the Governance of the IOT's.

An issue of concern to residents in relation to the governance of the Indian Ocean Territories is the practice adopted by the Department of Infrastructure, the administering Department, of not responding to correspondence from either the Administrator or community organisations.

The attached correspondence from the Christmas and Cocos Islands Health Consultative Groups was never responded to by the department despite repeated requests from me and a complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman by members of the Consultative Group. I have in my possession a raft of other community initiated correspondence which was similarly ignored by the Department. I am happy to provide that to the Committee.

None of the issues raised by residents in the correspondence was addressed while I was Administrator and my understanding is that even now, more than eighteen months after it was sent it has not been answered.

The Department consistently ignores correspondence from residents and community organisations and treats their views and concerns with contempt. I would be happy to expand on this in person if the Committee is inclined to invite me to give evidence.

I believe the practice of the Department of not responding to correspondence is unacceptable and that the Committee should inquire into and make recommendations on the practices of the Commonwealth in relation to consultation with the IOT communities and its obligation to respond to requests from the community for information and to respond in a timely way to correspondence.

I also believe that the Committee should inquire into and make recommendations on all of the issues raised in the attached correspondence from Health Consultative Groups.

It would also be useful, I think, if the Committee made it clear in its report that the extent to which the Commonwealth refuses to either consult with or respond to the concerns of the residents of the IOT's should not be applied to the administration of Norfolk Island now that its rights to self determination are to be annulled.

I regret that because of pressure on my time and hence my capacity to make a single submission I will of necessity have to make a number of separate submissions over the next month as time permits.

Yours sincerely

Jon Stanhope