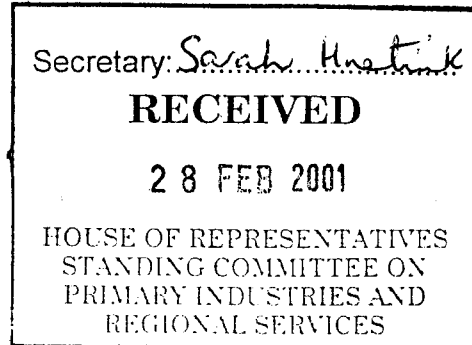


SUBMISSION NO. 9

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Primary Industries and Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Ms FC Murdoch BSc.
11 Vulture St
WEST END Q 4101

24th February 2001



Dear Committee (into bio-prospecting),

Thank you for this opportunity to make several comments:

- On the potential barriers to Australia reaping the benefits of bioprospecting...

There appear to be a number of ethical considerations...

1. Continental right to ecological integrity. Patents.
2. Indigenous people's rights. Royalties.
3. Education of Australians.
4. Conservation and 'ecological footprints'.
5. Carbon credit scheme.

1. That Australian continental resources need to be protected. That 'discovery is not invention'. Plant breeders' rights granted in these cases amounts to bio-piracy. That plant breeders do not have the right to co-opt naturally found resources, patent them and lock up those resources away from other potential beneficiaries. According to B. Hankin in Native Plant Rights, Green Connections, #18, June/July 1998, ownership rights appear to have been wrongly granted in the past and often, the culprits are Australian government agencies (such as CSIRO, state Departments of Agriculture and publicly-funded university centres.)

That a DNA library be set-up that documents Australian heritage and be available to all, while resultant benefits of that knowledge be paid back to Australia, as a percentage of world sales, when research comes to fruition. Honesty by researchers and their employers required.

2. That equity dictates the Australian Aboriginal people have a prior claim to intellectual property rights of native plant species. Royalties should be generous (perhaps 20% of expected financial returns, when possible to extrapolate) and shared with other Australians (by percentage of population). Eventual real sales should also yield an ongoing return, again perhaps 20%, to the plant 'owners' (actually stewards).
3. That there be an ongoing intensive campaign to help educate the Australian peoples of their natural resource inheritance. That the issues of genetic engineering relate considerably to the issues of bio-prospecting. That education of the public is necessary to engender healthy debate about pros and cons of theory and practice. That debate is necessary to found a cohesive society that feels informed enough to be

able to present opinion on ethical issues, opinion being formed individually and founded on moral belief. That polls be conducted regularly as to ascertain major opinions. These cannot be assumed. One way to increase the wealth of Australians is to help educate us on the benefits of ethical investment opportunities. In this way 'green' companies get the support they need while profits stay within Australia - if the company is Australian, of course.

4. That conservation of natural resources is an imperative. That the paradigm of 'Natural Capitalism' (authors Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, Earthscan Publications, 1999) is a global imperative. i.e.
 1. Radical resource productivity - Using resources more effectively (slowing resource depletion, lowering pollution and providing a basis for increased employment in meaningful jobs.)
 2. Biomimicry - Eliminating the idea of waste through re-use of materials in a closed loop cycle.
 3. Service and flow economy - Restructure of economy to value natural resources.
 4. Investing in natural capital - Reversing destruction of natural capital by reinvestment in that capital through restocking.

These central strategies point out the importance of not selling our natural resources cheaply and possibly the need to re-plant/re-seed (to be required by legislation) in order to minimise our 'ecological footprint'.

5. That biological surveys (on ground) can be conducted by prospectors that help Australian government to know approximately how much of a resource under investigation, is available (to be required by legislation). This might be required as part of the search fee. Thus, as companies search an area we can gain information about the supplies, in an area, of our resources. It may be the time to start modelling and inventoring our plant carbon reserves. As we build a data bank on our natural reserves so we will be better equipped scientifically to put more appropriate economic prices on these reserves.

Thank you



Fiona Murdoch