

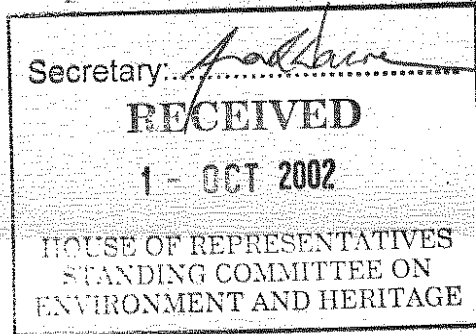
ATSIC

CHAIRMAN

SUBMISSION NO. 28

CH 20020468

Mr Ian Dundas
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Environment,
Recreation and the Arts
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601



Dear Mr Dundas

Thank you for your letter of 4 July 2002 inviting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Employment in the Environment Sector being conducted by the Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts.

I have addressed the terms of reference from an ATSIC perspective in a concise manner in expectation of a request from the Committee to provide further information regarding the Commission's detailed position at the Committee's hearings at a later date.

1) The current contribution of environmental goods and services to employment in Australia.

Although there is broad industry information available regarding the general contribution of environmental goods and services from the mainstream community towards employment, there is no significant data available regarding the specific contribution that Indigenous people currently make.

ATSIC recognises that there is a need to acquire such information and make it publicly accessible.

2) The future potential growth, including barriers and opportunities for growth, of environmental goods and services and impact on employment.

Last year, ATSIC provided a comprehensive submission (the Submission) to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Trade Sub-Committee Enquiry. This was called *Enterprising Australia- planning, preparing and profiting from trade and investment*.

This submission identified key areas within the environmental goods and services sector which afforded opportunities for development of business on Aboriginal and Torres Strait lands and waters.

The submission identified key areas for potential growth of Indigenous interests, some of which are listed below:

- a) Aquaculture and marine industries
- b) Rural industries
- c) Horticulture and agriculture
- d) Bushfoods
- e) Forestry
- f) Tourism
- g) Arts and Crafts
- h) Mining and mining-related industries
- i) Exporting appropriate technologies to third world users
- j) Information and telecommunications technology and
- k) Design and delivery of training and education programs.

Significant barriers to potential growth for Indigenous interests in this area were identified as being:

- a) Low levels of income.
- b) Conflict of priorities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
- c) Lack of resources in regional bodies.
- d) Under-resourced Native Title Representative Bodies.
- e) Inadequate recognition and protection by the legal system.
- f) Lack of capital and lack of investment in programs by government agencies.
- g) Failure to access mainstream programs.
- h) Lack of business development expertise and financial literacy.
- i) Lack of necessary infrastructure and a low skills base.
- j) Lack of training and education.

3) Current status and future requirements for an appropriately skilled workforce

Although there is insufficient data specifically related to this area, the ACTU has provided some relevant statistics as a starting point. These statistics identify:

- a) the employment rate for Indigenous Australians is significantly lower than for the total of the Australian population;
- b) the median income for Indigenous Australians is significantly lower when compared to the weekly earnings of non-Indigenous people;
- c) a significant number of Indigenous Australians are employed in part time work as opposed to full time work; and
- d) a significant proportion of the Indigenous working population is dependent upon the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) for employment. CDEP participants are not included in official employment statistics.

4) Appropriate policy measures that could encourage the further development of the environmental goods and services sector.

The Submission identified the following policy measures as central to the further development of Indigenous participation in the environmental goods and services sector:

- a) taxation incentives;
- b) partnership agreements with Corporate Australia;
- c) strengthening regional bodies;
- d) resourcing Native Title Representative Bodies;
- e) implementation of Industry Strategies;
- f) improving Indigenous access to programs;
- g) improving education, training and business development support;
- h) fostering micro and small business development in communities;
- i) improving access to capital;
- j) legislative reform;
- k) protecting land holders and
- l) promoting Indigenous entrepreneurs and assets

5) Information and reporting systems that would support the uptake of environmental goods and services to enhance overall business performance and development of the sector.

ATSIC has identified the following initiatives that may provide improvements in information and reporting:

- a) Implementation of an ATSIC designed and managed national Score Card for overall performance measurement and monitoring of Indigenous employment issues.
- b) Implementation of a National Forestry Strategy, a joint strategy between ATSIC and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry – Australia.
- c) Implementation of the Tourism initiative, which is a joint initiative between ATSIC, Industry Tourism Resources and Indigenous Tourism Leadership Group.
- d) Implementation of proposed initiatives by Indigenous Business Australia regarding mining, fishing and tourism.

Thank you for bringing this initiative to my attention. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.

Yours sincerely



Geoff Clark

30 SEP 2002