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Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Joint Standing Committee on the
National Capital and External Territories

Submission No: 18

Date Received: 9/4/08

Dear Committee

Secretary:

INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AUTHORITY

I refer to the Joint Standing Committee's current enquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority (NCA).

Canberra is Ngambri land. Our people have met in this country for countless generations. Europeans have met here only a short time. Canberra is now a place where indigenous and non-indigenous Australians meet. This year's opening of parliament with a smoking ceremony brought together our two cultures at a common place of meeting.

For many years the NCA has worked with the local and national indigenous community on a diverse range of matters. These extend from the ongoing management of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, undertaking cultural heritage studies, holding of smoking ceremonies, engagement of indigenous artists and the development of Reconciliation Place.

As a Ngambri elder I am pleased to inform the committee that the NCA has actively consulted with the local and, where appropriate, national indigenous community. This consultation, initiated by the NCA and has always been sensitive, open and honest. The NCA has heard the diverse views of our people and acted appropriately.

The Commonwealth Government are now the custodians of this place. It is their responsibility to ensure the indigenous people's interests are preserved. The Commonwealth must provide opportunity for gathering, celebrating and honouring in the symbolic and democratic heart of the nation. The Commonwealth Government is responsible for the ongoing care of this place and must provide opportunities for indigenous people to celebrate their culture. The NCA performs this role well and I encourage the Committee to recommend that the role of the NCA be continued.

I would be pleased to discuss the work of the NCA with the indigenous community with the committee.

Matilda House-Williams
8 April 2008