

Fr. Dalton Bon
PO Box 129
Thursday Island
QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4069 1656

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Increasing Indigenous Business Opportunities

My name is Father Dalton Bon. I was born and raised on Mer Island and I am a proud member of the Zenadth Kes nation in the Torres Strait.

As you know, for a long time, the history of my people was such that the setting up of a business was an opportunity denied to Islander people under the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (Qld) of 1897.

As a young man I and my peers, one of whom was the man you know as Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo, would dream of sharing the beauty of our homelands with others. As we looked out across the great lands, seas and sky of the Torres Strait we would make plans and imagine ventures that we would undertake were we free to do so.

Alas at that time, under the auspices of the Aboriginal Protector, life was much more restricted than we experience today and we were unable to begin the process of turning our dreams into reality.

As I read of your inquiry to be chaired by Mr Richard Marles MP I saw an opportunity to pursue these long-held ideas and bring them to fruition.

If you look at the ancient and recent history of my people you will see that we are a proud people and a strong people. Before time we were fearsome warriors, strong in the defence of our islands and rich in our culture. In the more recent past we have worked tirelessly in the pearling and trochus shell industries, we have used our strength and resilience to lay railways across the land of Australia to which we belong, and we have used our courage and our potency in mining and other industries.

Since the demise of the pearling and associated industries, most employment opportunities have taken my people away from their homelands and have distanced them from their culture. It is my vision that, with assistance and encouragement, we will be able to develop vibrant and sustainable enterprises in the Torres Strait to bring to fruition not only those dreams of my youth but also to bring hope to the youth of today.

I believe having viable, Islander-owned and run businesses in the Torres Strait will provide the beginnings of social, spiritual and cultural reform at a grassroots level. In addition to helping lift my people from the cycle of welfare and disillusionment, successful business owners will offer positive role models to younger people who will see that success is attainable by their own people and within their own communities.

Although there is vast scope for business possibilities within our communities my own ideas are centred around welcoming accommodation experiences for visitors with the goal of increasing positive tourism to the area. We live in a beautiful, rich,

RECEIVED
02 JUL 2008

BY: ATSIA

Submission No.	1
Date Received	

multicultural and diverse area which could be shared with people from all around the world, to the betterment of the Torres Strait and Australian people.

I believe if this area were able to accommodate more visitors at reasonable cost, and provide them with an insight into our history, our culture and our welcoming friendliness, we would have not only a recipe for economic success but also for success on the deeper levels of shared understanding, common goals and true reconciliation.

The ability to accommodate people is fundamental to the development of many other businesses that rely on visitors for their sustainability. Without the scope to accommodate visitors it is difficult for other tourist-based industries to develop and prosper.

I thank you for this opportunity to be able to share my vision with you and I look forward to discussing this with you further.

May God Bless you.

Kind Regards and Best Wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' and 'B' intertwined, followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Father Dalton Bon.