



ATSIC

SUBMISSION NO. 30

Secretary: *Sarah Hnatiuk*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND
REGIONAL SERVICES

CEO 20010033

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

Dear Ms Hnatiuk

You wrote to the Chief Executive Officer on 13 March 2001 inquiring whether the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission would be making a submission to the Inquiry into Development of High Technology Industries in Regional Australia based on Bioprospecting and Bioprocessing.

ATSIC is mindful of two key points for Indigenous peoples in Regional Australia:

1. Protection of Indigenous peoples' rights in intellectual and cultural property matters, and in relation to resources on lands in which Indigenous peoples have strong interests:
2. Increasing the range and opportunities for Indigenous employment and economic development including entrepreneurship, joint ventures and partnerships in commercialisation and production developments.

On the first point, we draw your attention to discussions on Indigenous interests in the July 2000 report of the Commonwealth Public Inquiry on *Access to Biological Resources in Commonwealth Areas* and we attach ATSIC's submission on *Indigenous Rights and Interests in Biological Resources and Biodiversity* to the Inquiry (Attachment A). The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has also funded the *Aboriginal People and Biodiversity Project* which provides concrete evidence of Indigenous peoples' attachment and values of land and biodiversity. There is a wealth of emerging material in Indigenous biodiversity considerations at both domestic and international level.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMISSION

Woden Tower Phillip ACT 2606 • PO Box 17 Woden ACT 2606

Tel: (02) 6121 4000 • Fax: (02) 6281 0772

www.atsic.gov.au

On the second point, ATSIC draws the Committee's attention to Indigenous interests in the proceedings of the Government's Regional Australia Summit, held October 1999 (www.dotrs.gov.au/regional/summit). ATSIC represented Indigenous viewpoints throughout preparations and proceedings of the Summit, emphasising that:

Most of our peoples live in regional Australia. Our communities and people are part of regional Australia: some 64% of our people live in rural centres in Regional Australia with 21% of our people living in remote towns, communities and outstations. Too often in regional Australia, Indigenous concerns are considered separately, not part of the context of mainstream interests. In all cases our communities are also integral part of innovative solutions for Regional Australia.

We refer you to particular background papers including:

Value adding to regional communities and farming industries, including amongst others in this theme-

- Value adding to Regional Communities and their farming industries: Indigenous issues in Regional Australia (http://www.dotrs.gov.au/regional/summit/program/background/pdf/pritchard_paper.pdf)
- The end of the commodity culture (http://www.dotrs.gov.au/regional/summit/program/background/pdf/goyder_paper.pdf)

And other papers.

- Aboriginal Regional Australia: The hidden dimension of community governance (http://www.dotrs.gov.au/regional/summit/program/background/pdf/fletcher_paper.pdf)
- The importance of Regional Australia and the Opportunity for Entrepreneurship (http://www.dotrs.gov.au/regional/summit/program/background/pdf/hanley_paper.pdf)

We also refer the Committee to ATSIC's Rural Industries Strategy (published May 1997, available on ATSIC's website www.atsic.gov.au [then go to online publications / National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rural Industry Strategy]). The Industry's key aim is to enable Indigenous peoples in rural and remote areas to better use rural resources to produce economic benefits for their communities. The Strategy focusses on traditional rural industries including agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, bushfoods and wild animal production. ATSIC had also previously provided financial support to the Bureau of Resource Sciences for the Aboriginal Rural Resource Initiatives Projects evaluation of the 73 natural rural resources management projects, and for the Bush Tucker study. Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia (AFFA) could provide the Inquiry with a range of relevant information.

ATSIC's Environment Policy, adopted by the Board of Commissioners in November 1994, has as one of its Objectives, the rehabilitation and care of the Australian environment. To this end, it should be noted that ATSIC is strongly in favour of any endeavours to rehabilitate and add value to Australian ecosystems and landscapes. ATSIC strongly encourages research and

development on alternative economic land uses, and on the protection and rehabilitation of (land, water quality,) biodiversity and ecosystems.

We also strongly encourage, and expect, consultation, negotiation and partnership arrangements with Indigenous peoples and representative bodies. ATSIC Regional Councils, which have been operating since 1990, have an active interest in Inquiry matters. While Regional Councils set out to improve the cultural, social and economic status of Indigenous peoples within the regions; they do so through a variety of means including constructive engagement with mainstream structures and developments.

We could also offer ATSIC assistance with the Inquiry's visits to regional Australia – for example, arranging discussions with and visits to relevant Indigenous communities.

Thank you for drawing this opportunity to ATSIC's attention. We look forward to seeing Indigenous issues addressed within the Committee's final report.

Yours sincerely



Geoffrey Richardson
Manager
Community and Economic Development
National Policy Office

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