



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Inquiry: Northern Territory Statehood

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 28 May 2007

Chairman: Peter Slipper MP

Report on Northern Territory statehood released

The House of Representatives Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee today released its report on the federal implications of statehood for the Northern Territory, *The long road to statehood*.

Committee Chairman, Peter Slipper MP, said that the establishment of the first new state in the constitutional history of Australia is no simple matter.

“The prospect of statehood raises a host of unresolved constitutional, policy and administrative issues that may impact on current federal arrangements,” he said. “These issues include the future treatment of Aboriginal land rights, representation and legislative arrangements, mining and uranium resource issues and national parks and marine protected areas.”

In 2003 the Northern Territory Chief Minister Clare Martin put statehood back on the agenda by announcing a new community focused campaign. “Many Territorians appear to be in favour of the idea of statehood despite the failed referendum on the issue in 1998” Mr Slipper said.

On 14-16 November 2006, the Committee held a statehood seminar in Alice Springs and Darwin where it heard a variety of views on a range of unresolved issues. “The most contentious issues centred on the representation of the new state in the federal parliament, the future treatment of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, and the role of the Commonwealth government in assisting the Territory to achieve statehood”.

“Territorians were uncertain of the current position of the federal government on Northern Territory statehood. Historically, the Commonwealth considered that statehood was a domestic matter to be resolved by Territorians alone, with the in-principle support of the federal government. However, without Commonwealth involvement, the Territory government would not be able to put before its people a model of statehood that contained specific proposals on issues such as the number of Senators for the new state.”

The report demonstrates the complexity of creating a new state in the Australian federation and makes one recommendation: that the federal government update and refine its position on Northern Territory statehood and re-commence work on unresolved federal issues. “By refreshing its position on statehood, the Commonwealth would assist the Northern Territory in further developing its own position on statehood and allow the Territory government to consult its citizens with more concrete proposals” Mr Slipper said.

For media interview:

Please contact the Committee Chairman, Peter Slipper MP on (07) 5443 3555 (electorate office) or on (02) 6277 4975 (Canberra office).

Or Mr Slipper’s media adviser, Richard Bruinsma, on 0417 486 673.

For further information, including the terms of reference, a program, an information paper, and copies of submissions, please visit the inquiry website at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/ntstatehood/index.htm> or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 2358.

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