



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

**Reference: Reeves report on the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern
Territory) Act**

WEDNESDAY, 14 APRIL 1999

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
AFFAIRS

Wednesday, 14 April 1999

Members: Mr Lieberman (*Chair*), Mrs Draper, Mr Haase, Ms Hoare, Mr Katter, Mr Lloyd, Mr Melham, Mr Quick, Mr Snowdon and Mr Wakelin

Members in attendance: Ms Hoare, Mr Lieberman, Mr Lloyd, Mr Melham, Mr Quick, Mr Snowdon and Mr Wakelin

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

The Committee shall inquire into and report on the views of people who have an interest in the possible implementation of recommendations made in the Reeves Report. In particular the Committee will seek views on:

- (1) the proposed system of Regional Land Councils, including
 - (a) the extent to which they would provide a greater level of self-management for Aboriginal people, and
 - (b) the role of traditional owners in decision making in relation to Aboriginal land under that system;
- (2) the proposed structure and functions of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Council;
- (3) the proposed changes to the operations of the Aboriginals Benefit Reserve including the distribution of monies from the Reserve;
- (4) the proposed modifications to the mining provisions of the Act including the continuing role of government in the administration of these provisions;
- (5) proposals concerning access to Aboriginal land including the removal of the permit system and access to such land by the Northern Territory government; and
- (6) the proposed application of Northern Territory laws to Aboriginal land.

The Committee shall make recommendations on any desirable changes to the proposals made in the Reeves report in the light of the views obtained.

[10.30 a.m.]

PARTICIPANTS

COLLINS, Raelene

GOREY, Beryl

HAGGEN, Ron

HAYNES, Paul

HEFFERNAN, Bill

HINES, Jimmy

KITCHEN, Kitty

LECHLEITNER, Kenny, Principal Interpreter

PENANGKE, Eric

PENGARTE, Topsy

PRICE, Hilda

ROBINYA, Clarry

STUART, Max

TURNER, Arthur

TURNER, Margaret Mary, Principal Interpreter

WOOD, Big Billy

CHAIR—I now call this public meeting to order. On behalf of the committee I would like to say that we are very happy to be here today. We are looking forward to having a good talk together. Before I say any more, I would like my friends on the committee to introduce themselves. They will tell you their name, where they come from in Australia and their position in the Commonwealth parliament. They will also set a good example regarding the microphone. Whenever any of you speak today on the microphones—and we hope many of you will—we would like you to remember to tell us your name and where you come from so that can also be clearly on the record.

Mr SNOWDON—I am the member for the Northern Territory and I live in Alice Springs.

MAX STUART—I am Max Stuart, the Chairman of the Central Land Council.

Mr WAKELIN—I am from South Australia. I have the Pitjantjatjara country in my patch.

Mr LLOYD—My electorate is north of Sydney in New South Wales.

Ms HOARE—My electorate is south of Newcastle in New South Wales.

Mr MELHAM—I am from Bankstown in New South Wales where Steve and Mark Waugh come from. I am the shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs.

CHAIR—You will see that we have two interpreters: Margaret Mary Turner and Kenny Lechleitner. We thank Margaret Mary and Kenny for helping us today. Sometimes they will each interpret—separately, one after the other. At other times one will do it. I will leave it to Margaret Mary and Kenny to decide how they do it from time to time.

We have come up from Canberra today to ask you for your advice on what you think we should tell John Herron, the minister, about the Reeves report. We come from different political parties in the House of Representatives, but we are working as a team on this inquiry to do our best for the Aboriginal people and for the people of the Northern Territory.

We have an open mind. We have not made up our mind yet on what we will tell John Herron and the parliament in Canberra. We have two more months of inquiry to go, and we have a lot of people in communities in the Northern Territory who will give us their advice, as you will today.

What you all say today will be recorded. We have reporters from the parliament called Hansard reporters, and they will be recording. When they go back to Canberra it will be written out. We will send you all a copy of today's proceedings, so you will have it yourselves too.

When you come up to the microphone, would you please remember to tell us your name and where you come from. We need to know that, and the parliamentary Hansard reporters will be able to have that typed out for you as well. It is important that you help us in that way.

Let us start. We want to know what you think. What do you want us to tell John Herron and the parliament about the Reeves report? Does anyone want to go first? We have got two interpreters, Margaret Mary and Kenny. When you come up to the microphone, if you would like Margaret Mary or Kenny to interpret what you say for you, could you just say that when you come up to the microphone? If you do not mind who does it, then Kenny and Margaret Mary will work out which one does it for us. Are you all happy with that? That is fair, I think.

MARGARET MARY TURNER—I will interpret for the ladies and Kenny will do it for the men.

CHAIR—Before the first person comes up, remember that it is very important that you have your say today. We mean that sincerely. We want to know what you think. Do not

worry if you think someone here might not agree with you. We are all friends together and we can all have different opinions without worrying about that. We want you to tell us now, take the opportunity, because it is a great opportunity to do it. Do your best. I know it is a bit hard to come up to the microphone, but we are all friends together and we all want to do a good job together. Relax and feel comfortable with us. We are very happy that we are with you today.

ARTHUR TURNER—I am from the Engawala community, and I am representing the Anmatjere community government council. I am the chairperson of that council. I am going to get to the point straightaway because I do not have any choice. In our area, we do not have good communication with the CLC and that is why we would like a separate land council. We really have a problem. I knew from the start that I had a problem, and I have still got the problem. That is the point I want to make. If we could have a separate land council, we could have self-management and self-determination for our people, for our future. We are not saying that the CLC is doing the wrong thing, but it is not communicating with us, and that is the problem as I see it. It does not have a partnership of working with the people.

If we could have a separate land council in the Anmatjere area, we could be represented in future for mining, for self-management, for looking after land and all those sorts of things. We are already looking after our country today and we want to get more power. If we could have a separate land council, we could go ahead and do our business. At the moment, we do not have anything to do because the CLC is so big and it is really taking over from our people in Anmatjere country.

The policy that was set up with the CLC is really a difficult thing for us to understand, because we might have mining over here or wherever but we have to go back to the CLC and the CLC has to tell them to go ahead or whatever. That is the point that we are looking at.

It would be better if we could have a separate land council in the Anmatjere area so that we can represent our own people, because already the elders' leaders are representing us now—today. That is why we want to get the separate land council in the Anmatjere area: so that that will be really glued onto our country and work through the elders' leaders. The elders' leaders will be doing everything, and the separate land council will be on top working with the elders' leaders.

At the moment it is somewhat up in the air and a lot of the people do not understand what they are doing in this country. That is the reason why we want to get into this: we would like to be looking after our country. At the moment the old people do not know what to do because they are already in charge of a country and other people are taking over. We do not like to see that happening, and that is happening already. It is not working with the Aboriginal people; it is working outside of the Aboriginal people.

CHAIR—Thank you, Arthur. Can I ask you a question; are you happy to answer a question?

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes.

CHAIR—Have your people made an application to be a separate land council?

ARTHUR TURNER—That has already been recorded, and that should be on the way.

CHAIR—How many people are involved in your application?

ARTHUR TURNER—We are looking at 10 communities being involved in a separate land council.

CHAIR—How many hundred people?

ARTHUR TURNER—We are looking at 1,500 people.

CHAIR—Have you asked Central Land Council councillors for their support?

ARTHUR TURNER—When we were asking the Central Land Council to support us, they would not take any notice. They just ignored us.

CHAIR—So you feel a bit on your own?

ARTHUR TURNER—We are feeling that we are on our own.

CHAIR—Some of the communities in other areas have told us that they like the regional offices of the land councils and that they would like to see more regional offices rather than new, separate land councils. Can you tell me what you think of that idea for this area?

ARTHUR TURNER—From what I can see the regional council office is still representing the Central Land Council. Regional offices would not be on their own. They would still be representing the CLC.

CHAIR—So you feel they would not speak for your people?

ARTHUR TURNER—I would like to see a separate land council set up in the Anmatjere area to represent our own people.

CHAIR—How much traditional land has been granted so far to your people in this area?

ARTHUR TURNER—Which traditional land is granted?

CHAIR—Under the Northern Territory land act?

ARTHUR TURNER—I think that is good, but we would like to set up a separate land council and to represent our own people. We would like to be doing our own business in our area, because we are the people who have culture, law and language right here and we do not want any other people to represent our country.

CHAIR—One idea someone mentioned to me was, 'Lou, can't we have the big land council to make the applications for the land?'

ARTHUR TURNER—But you have got to think, too, because freehold title today is freehold title. The mob does not understand.

KENNY LECHLEITNER—I will just reiterate that the question asked by the chairman was in regard to which area or which boundary was handed back or given back. We are trying to clarify which areas were given back and which boundaries—how much of an area in the operation.

ARTHUR TURNER—I am going to get to the point again, because whatever things are done, mining or whatever, we like to be doing it from the Anmatjere area, if we can get the separate land council. The decision on mining will be made by the Anmatjere council, and they can get together and go and do it.

Mr QUICK—Arthur, what do you think about Reeves? Reeves wants to get rid of land councils and have 18 regional councils, and then have NTAC with 15 people chosen by John Herron and the Chief Minister in Darwin. What do you think of that one?

ARTHUR TURNER—With the Reeves report, we can report that, because we have got a really good understanding of the Reeves report.

Mr QUICK—Are you happy with Reeves?

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes, we are happy with the Reeves report.

Mr SNOWDON—Arthur, you are happy with the Reeves report, which says that, with regard to any money which comes from mining, the decisions about that money might be made by NTAC and not the local people?

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes, I am happy with that arrangement.

Mr SNOWDON—So you are happy for the money to go to NTAC?

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes.

Mr SNOWDON—The money will not go to the local community. That is all right, is it?

ARTHUR TURNER—No, the point is that, for mining, there will be a decision from the separate land council, and they will be making the decision. So the company will be coming straight to wherever the separate land council is.

Mr SNOWDON—But that is not what John Reeves says. John Reeves says that the decisions about what people might do with their land could well be made by the Northern Territory Aboriginal body—this top body—not the regional council.

CHAIR—We will pause while the interpreters try to explain what has been going on.

KENNY LECHLEITNER—We, as interpreters, would like to set a rule here, so that if we could do it bit by bit, then it is easier to follow. If the speakers could give a brief spiel,

then hold, and then we will say something. I will just elaborate in regard to setting these new rules, so that the speaker can make a statement, then we can at least try and reiterate that in language. It is going to be a long day.

CHAIR—Warren, keep your questions short and let them answer.

Mr SNOWDON—I will say it again: are people aware that, under the Reeves proposal, decisions about your land might not be made by you but could be made by the NTAC body? That body will have the power to make decisions about your country, override the regional land council and take the decisions away from the regional land councils.

KENNY LECHLEITNER—They understand what the report is saying about that in regard to the NTAC situation. So it is getting it from both sides here.

Mr SNOWDON—I want to know what Arthur thinks. Does he support that idea? Does he think that is a good idea?

KENNY LECHLEITNER—He feels okay about that decision or that statement.

Mr SNOWDON—Does he feel okay about NTAC making decisions about the royalties?

KENNY LECHLEITNER—They feel okay about that decision.

Mr SNOWDON—Does he feel okay about it or does everyone feel okay about it? Who is he speaking on behalf of?

CHAIR—Hang on, Warren. It is Arthur who is being asked the question. He will say what he thinks.

Mr SNOWDON—But the interpreter said ‘they’.

CHAIR—Then we will have a separate question about whether he is speaking for others.

Mr SNOWDON—Can I ask this question: are you speaking for yourself or for everyone here?

ARTHUR TURNER—I am speaking for the Anmatjere people. I am representing the Anmatjere people.

Mr SNOWDON—You are confident that all the Anmatjere people here agree with you?

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes.

Mr SNOWDON—Okay.

CHAIR—Ladies and gentlemen, anyone who wants to say something different from Arthur will be able to do so when they get to the microphone.

Ms HOARE—Arthur, you have got a current application with the minister for a separate land council. When that application was lodged it would have been lodged under the current land rights act. Do you see the current land rights act as being a good basis for your group to form your own land council? The avenues are there for you to apply. It is now with the minister. That application was made under the original land rights act. Do you agree with those provisions in that act?

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes.

CHAIR—That is a clear answer.

Mr MELHAM—Arthur, you complain that the Central Land Council is making decisions for your mob. Isn't it worse if the Northern Territory government, that is full of white fellas, is making decisions for your mob? It seems to me to be a bit inconsistent.

CHAIR—We will try to interpret that one. That is not what the Reeves report said, by the way.

ARTHUR TURNER—Some things cannot be changed, and that is the point that I am looking at because for a moment people can't get over. It is really big and that is why people can't get over. Aboriginal cannot make any decisions. That is the point—that is what we are looking at.

Mr MELHAM—So it is the bigness rather than the current act that you are worried about—is that right? Reeves's change is not just bigness. It is a lot different from what is happening now.

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes.

Mr MELHAM—You are more worried about bigness? That is why you want your own land council?

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes, that is right.

Mr MELHAM—So, if you can get that without Reeves, you would be happy?

ARTHUR TURNER—We agree with that Reeves report. We can see the point. That can come to a separate land council. That is the point that we are looking at.

CHAIR—Thank you. You have given part of the answer. I will now ask the interpreters to catch up. Arthur, have you finished your answer to that last question?

ARTHUR TURNER—I will finish with this. I know the big land council is too big and it will never operate with all the people, from what I can see. It is missing a lot of people and a lot of people are missing out from all that. We would like to set up separate land councils.

Mr SNOWDON—Mr Turner, if there were a separate land council, would there be a claim over Alcoota?

CHAIR—We will translate that before Arthur answers.

Mr ARTHUR TURNER—All that can come after. We want to set up this first before we talk about issues. I think we should be setting up a separate land council first, then we can see.

Mr SNOWDON—But, Mr Turner, isn't true—

CHAIR—We will get Arthur's answer translated, thank you.

Mr SNOWDON—Mr Turner, isn't it true that you are in court opposing the claim by the Central Land Council on behalf of 120 traditional owners?

Mr ARTHUR TURNER—That is right.

Mr SNOWDON—Who is funding you?

ARTHUR TURNER—I can't tell you that.

KENNY LECHLEITNER—Just the figure?

Mr SNOWDON—120 traditional owners were in that claim.

ARTHUR TURNER—120 traditional owners claimed and signed.

Mr SNOWDON—And you are in court with four other people opposing that claim?

KENNY LECHLEITNER—Arthur is in court opposing, against, the land claim.

Mr SNOWDON—And isn't it true that you are funded by the Northern Territory government?

ARTHUR TURNER—Yes, funding from the Northern Territory government. I think we are talking about a different issue. We are talking about a separate land council. We are not talking about this issue. We are talking about a separate issue. We are talking about the land council—the establishing of the land council.

Mr SNOWDON—What I am trying to establish is that Mr Turner has had a long-running fight with the Central Land Council and a lot of the traditional owners for Alcoota because he has got a different point of view to them.

ARTHUR TURNER—There have been so many other land claims, but the other land claims actually profit from those land claims.

CHAIR—Just before Warren proceeds with his next question, I indicate that this will be the last question because I want to give other people a go and it is important that we keep it flowing. So, Warren, you have got one more question. Arthur will answer it and then, as Chair, I am going to ask for another speaker to come up.

Mr SNOWDON—I just want to clear this up. Isn't it true that the Northern Territory government funded you up to \$50,000 for the breakaway land council? Isn't it true that the Northern Territory government is backing your claim against the land council in court? All I require is 'yes' or 'no'.

CHAIR—He can answer it how he likes.

ARTHUR TURNER—I am not going to answer.

CHAIR—That is fine. No-one will be forced to answer a question here. Arthur, thank you for that. I appreciate your candour in coming up here. We are going to move to the next speaker—whoever would like to speak. I just emphasise, and I would like the interpreters to pass this on, that no-one here today at our meeting should feel frightened about having a different view. You are entitled to your views, and we respect those. So, if you have got a different view, we respect that too. Do not feel frightened because you have got a different view. Margaret Mary has asked me to say to the ladies that they would be very welcome to put their points of view.

CLARRY ROBINYA—I am Chairman of Papunya Regional Council. The Anmatjere people asked me to represent them. Let us get to the point of the submission that the Anmatjere put in first. Anmatjere put in that submission about the separate land council. You have got to think that there were 10 communities.

I will speak in English, in order to explain it to your mob. There were 10 communities involved in that submission. Out of that 10, one is pulling out—Laramba. It is no longer involved in that submission. It is not only a matter of the 10 communities; you have to think about the western areas which are not part of the Anmatjere council. There are seven outstations, Yuendumu community and Laramba are getting together now and they want to break away. They want to stick with the old law, with the Central Land Council. Maybe they are looking at setting up a region No. 9 through the land council. This is what we are thinking about.

You might get the wrong opinion from one person; I want to speak for the other half of the Anmatjere people. We are no longer involved with the submission that is sitting in Canberra. We are separate now. That is why we who are here have come separately this morning. That is where we are at at the moment: we are not supporting this new NTAC body which will be set up. I think it is totally wrong. It will be powerless. Non-indigenous people making decisions for Aboriginal people is not right. We are going back to the old sixties laws.

CHAIR—Did everybody understand what he just said? Please put your hands up. I think we will need an interpreter. We are going to interpret what you are saying from now on.

Stick to English. Would you do it in short grabs and leave the interpreters to do their job. Make your next statement, keeping it short, and the interpreters will interpret that.

CLARRY ROBINYA—Which statement do you want me to make now? That is the problem we are having.

CHAIR—Let me explain. As I understand it, you have told me that your people do not agree with Arthur's view. Your people do not agree with the changes that Mr Reeves recommends. Those are the two points that I think you made. Am I right?

CLARRY ROBINYA—Yes.

CHAIR—I will ask Margaret Mary and Kenny to briefly say those two things in the languages that they are interpreting. Would you like to continue?

CLARRY ROBINYA—I am worrying about that royalty too. When a drilling rig comes in, it drills a hole and finds minerals and then they give that money to ABR. That is going to be finished now. That is going to go to another body and that body will be non-indigenous people mixed up, sitting there, making decisions. That is not right.

At the moment you have got two bodies. At the moment ABR is made up of Aboriginal people. They sit at that table and look at how much royalty money comes in every financial year. Aboriginal people who are elected from each region through the Central Land Council make the decision when they see a submission. They give the money back to the communities—successful communities that are going to look after things. I reckon that is the right way of doing it at the moment. ABTA has been doing a good job. You are now going to form another body that really does not understand what is going on out in the community and how it is operating. You are going to get them to make the decisions for all the people like this. I do not think it will work. It is just going to create argument.

I wanted to cover one more thing—I only had three things: the submission for the Anmatjere land council, the ABR funds, and the permit system. You know that for Aboriginal land you have got a permit. Any people who come onto Aboriginal land—such as non-indigenous people who might be doing some selling, hawkers in trucks that sell everything—have got to have a permit. When you have got the permit system, people have got to have a licence. Mining people have got to get a permit through the land council to go onto Aboriginal land.

The Reeves report says they are going to take away that permit system. They are going to take the permit off Aboriginal land and make it open for people to come in and do what they want—shooting, digging holes and destroying everything. I think it is not right for people to do those sorts of things. I think that the permit system should stay as it is. We think it is wrong to take it away.

MAX STUART—I am Chairman of the Central Land Council. That Reeves thing, we had a three-day meeting at Kalkarindji, and now a statement has been brought out by Reeves different to what we were saying at that three day meeting at Kalkarindji. All that royalty we

were talking about, now that has got to be cut out from Aborigines, the traditional owners. When the people of Wave Hill walked out that started the land council. Before that, there was only tea and sugar and a stick of tobacco a day. I am chairman and my staff are over here. They work for me, under me. They work under the full land council. They are the land council, not me.

I am looking forward to us standing together, holding out our land council as it is and for the permits to be there. Any non-indigenous do not have the right to go to any settlement or part of the country. Even our sacred sites are going to be taken away from us. They are going to start taking our sacred sites and all this. We are going to have to have a permit to go to our sacred sites, and that is not right. In Canberra, I told them straight—everybody is talking about our affairs in that way. I had to walk in the front of Reeves and I nearly ripped him apart, because I found out what was in that book. That book is false. That is not what we said in Kalkarindji. It is false.

The Reeves report is looking to get the power from us Aborigines. Then when they get the power we are going to finish up. We are going to go back to the tea and sugar days with a hole in the pants, no shoes, riding a horse, bludging the Chinaman for a bit of butter. In the tea and sugar days, I was riding out here working for Billy Hefferman. I had a hole in my pants too. I am trying to look after my people and myself, but I still have got nothing in my pocket. No government ever gave me nothing. I am still proud of my country.

From my point of view I want to put straight what Reeves said. I have got a backpack full of problems. Fill up my water can with water or sand; that's me. All my life I was blind. We were all blind men. Now when we start to look, we can see. This bloke, Mr Reeves, has now come along. He is a QC; I know that. Sometimes a lawyer and a QC turns into a liar. He tried to pull our eyelids over us so we can be blind.

CHAIR—Max, I do not want to be rude, but there are a lot of people wanting to talk. Would you keep your comments on the Reeves recommendations, if you would not mind?

Mr SNOWDON—Mr Chairman, can I just clear something up for the sake of everyone? Is it not true that the Anmatjere people have got a private meeting with the committee this afternoon? So perhaps they could let other people speak this morning.

CHAIR—Max, I want you to speak, but keep it to the Reeves comments.

MAX STUART—I want to tell my point of view—on behalf of my people, my bosses and my staff, what I think of Reeves. He is bringing a big problem, not for the whitefellows, but for the blackfellows. They are rolling the wagon wheel backwards. That is what he is doing.

CHAIR—Thank you Max. Margaret Mary has told me the women would like to say something. I have just had someone explain to me that the gentlemen who was interrupting was saying, 'Look here Mr Chairman, people are talking too long and not enough people are getting a go.' Good on you. I agree with you. Billy, do you want to add something else? Then one of the women will be taking the microphone.

BIG BILLY WOOD—I am Big Billy. I am a big fellow. I am from Ti Tree. I will talk in my lingo. We called a meeting and we called the others to come here to have a talk in regard to whoever supported it, or to stand alone, or to stand with the other land councils. I have just come here to talk. We as all people should talk, and then talk amongst each other here as well so that we can be heard.

CHAIR—Thank you, Billy, I appreciate that. One of the women is going to speak, I understand.

RAELENE COLLINS—I just want one land council. We do not want any government. The land council has given us the land so that we can walk around and gather. The land council has done a lot of work for us. That is my word.

KITTY KITCHEN—I am very happy that the land council helps us. That is good.

BERYL GOREY—I am from the Laramba community. The land council is a good help to everyone. If anyone comes to town, the land council can help us.

TOPSY PENGARTE—I am Topsy Pengarte from Laramba. We want our own land council.

MARGARET MARY TURNER—They want to let the men talk.

HILDA PRICE—My name is Hilda Price. The land council has given us our land back. We want to keep it like that. We do not want to make a mess. That is how we want to stay. It is good. We want to keep it as it is. It was given to us.

CHAIR—Thank you, Margaret Mary, and thank you, ladies. We appreciate what you said.

RON HAGGEN—I live at the Yuelamu community. To get our land back, the land council worked really hard. Now we are thinking about going the other way, we trying to give this land back to the government or something. This land is pretty important. The Reeves report is not worth it to me. Throw it in the rubbish dump. Land is to hold, not to hand back to the Northern Territory government or go back to the 1960s. Any royalty from the land should go to the people from that land, the traditional owners, not go to other people.

PAUL HAYNES—The land council did get the land back. The land council did do a lot of other good things but we want to see another kind of option, another change. We are talking a lot about this Reeves report which has been written. Why don't we as the Anmatjere people get together and talk about it and we can make a decision from there? Several members have spoken. Why can't we make this a land council? The land council suppresses us. We do not really get much funding from the land council. There are not any men in the land council who look after sacred sites. It is an issue for men working in the land council. That is all.

CHAIR—Thank you Paul. Before we adjourn for lunch, I want to make sure that you feel you have all had a fair go today. We can also talk over lunch. All the members are here so come and talk to us. We want to hear what you have to say. There is just one more gentleman who would like to say something before I close.

ERIC PENANGKE—I am a local government council member. We are gathered here today to talk about land and talk about issues that we know about, but we also feel that the land council took away some powers as well. We want to be able to come up with an outcome today.

We are here to talk about the land issue because it is Aboriginal land we are talking about and we are not here to argue. We are here to talk about the issues. Even within the land rights act, we cannot do anything. We want to be able to do something. We want to make something with the land, as do all Aboriginal people. Let us get together and say things. Have your say, but no arguments, just keep it to the point.

CHAIR—We have another speaker. I have to say yes to everybody. I do not care what side they are on. Whoever wants to speak can speak at this meeting.

CLARRY ROBINYA—I want to answer Eric's question. We are not here to stop the land council. Like I told you in the first place, we have to pull out. Anmatjere has to pull out. That is their right if they want to get a land council. We think it is a good idea if they want to set it up. We are not here to completely step on it. We have nine communities therefore we want to set up a region nine and be with that same old act, but not through John Reeves. We think John Reeves's review that he has done is not fair for Aboriginal people. It is not going to be fair. We are looking at nine communities in that area. If we are going to set up a separate land council, it is going to be powerless. It will have no power. The Territory government will just come and step on us all the time. If we make the decisions which they do not like, they are going to come and just step on us all the time. Whack us out with the hammer all the time, and knock us on the head, every time when we say, 'Out of the question'. That is what we are looking at. What Eric said is good. If they want to set up land councils, we think it is a good idea. We think it is good for them. That is all I wanted to answer.

CHAIR—Thank you.

KENNY LECHLEITNER—What they are saying is that they are in support of an Anmatjere land council being established, as their own sort of regional council. They are saying that in their scenario they want to be able to pull away and actually separate it, but remain with the large land council. They are happy to support the land council here if they want to establish it. They are happy with that.

ERIC PANANGKE—With these decisions—if we are going to move in this direction—the other family members, because we are all one family, want to remain within their own land council, and we want to establish our own land council on this side. Then we can see who is in the wrong; who is doing whatever job. They can only test it then and see what is happening, and whether they are so much better off with the Reeves report or forming their own land councils or remaining in the big land council. They will be able to test it. They are

saying, 'We are all one family, we are not going to argue about it.' They are making a clear decision here in regards to which way. They support each other's each way.

If we form our own little land council and the Territory government comes and stomps on it that is our problem. As for the others that remain within the large land council, good on them as well. They are willing to have a go at this, even if the Territory government comes and stomps on them. They want to give it a go on this side—their own land council. As it proceeds, we could leave it open. If they see in the future that they want to join, it is open for them. That is all.

JIMMY HINES—I am from Ti Tree, and I would like to talk about this separate land council. Yes, we want to have our own land council because a big land council is too difficult to work within. We have applied for it and it was really difficult to maintain funds. That is why the best way is to have our own separate land council. That is all I will say. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you, Jimmy. That winds it up. We have all had a good go. Everyone is happy and we are looking forward to lunch. I just say how much I have appreciated Margaret Mary's and Kenny's interpreting help. What about a big round of applause for them? They did a good job. Thank you very much.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Hoare**, seconded by **Mr Wakelin**):

That the committee authorise publication of the evidence given before it at public meeting this day.

Committee adjourned at 12.10 p.m.

