



# **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS**

**Reference: Greater autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders**

**CANBERRA**

**Tuesday, 18 March 1997**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**CANBERRA**

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

Members:

Mr Lieberman (Chair)

Mr Albanese	Mr Lloyd
Mr Campbell	Mr Marek
Mr Dondas	Mr Melham
Mr Entsch	Dr Nelson
Mr Holding	Mr Pyne
Mr Katter	Mr Quick
	Mr Tony Smith

Matter referred for inquiry into and report on:

Whether the people of the Torres Strait would benefit from a greater degree of autonomy;

If so, what forms should a greater degree of autonomy take; and

What implications would greater autonomy have for Torres Strait Islanders resident outside the Torres Strait region including whether the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission or the Torres Strait Regional Authority should represent the interests of such residents.

**WITNESSES**

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER AFFAIRS

*Greater autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders*

CANBERRA

Tuesday, 18 March 1997

Present

Mr Lieberman (Chair)

Mr Albanese

Mr Katter

Mr Campbell

Mr Lloyd

Mr Dondas

Dr Nelson

Mr Entsch

Mr A. Smith

The committee met at 4.04 p.m.

Mr Lieberman took the chair.

**ARTHUR, Mr William Stewart, Research Fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Crawford Building, Australian National University, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory**

**SANDERS, Dr William, Research Fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Crawford Building, Australian National University, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing on greater autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders and welcome witnesses and any members of the press and public who may be present. This is the fifth public hearing on this inquiry. We have received 32 submissions to date, with more promised.

I would like to take the opportunity to say just a few words about the inquiry. Terms like self-determination and greater autonomy mean different things to different people. The object of this inquiry is to find a meaning for greater autonomy which can meet the needs of the communities, representative bodies, governments and all others involved, taking into consideration the views of people in the Torres Strait and those who live on the mainland.

The outcome of the inquiry may not satisfy everyone. Some may find the slow processes of changing institutions frustrating, but it is not all bad news. What I can promise you is that the members of this committee bring to the inquiry immense goodwill towards Torres Strait Islanders wherever they may live. We will listen carefully to what you have to say. We will be searching for solutions which will bring benefits to all Torres Strait Islanders and we will do this to the very best of our ability.

I welcome witnesses from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research of the Australian National University. Gentlemen, you have sent a submission which the committee has received and we thank you very much. Do you have any amendments or additions you wish to make to that submission?

**Dr Sanders**—Perhaps I should say at the outset that we are in the process of writing a follow-up submission which we have been working on for a while. We anticipate being able to submit it to you within the next two or three weeks in response to a rather different interpretation of the terms of reference than we put on them in our first submission and in response to some of the other submissions to the committee that we became aware of which are taking that rather different approach to ourselves.

**CHAIR**—For the official record, can I assume that you do not wish to make any changes, amendments or additions to submission No. 1, which we presently have, but you are foreshadowing that you will make an additional submission based on new information and research?

**Dr Sanders**—That is correct.

**CHAIR**—With respect to your appearance today, would you like to make an opening statement before the members of the committee begin asking questions?

**Dr Sanders**—Yes, we would. I guess I have already alluded to it in those comments a minute ago that it seemed to us that the terms of reference for the committee were open to a number of different interpretations, particularly the focus of who it was that we were talking about in terms of being granted

greater autonomy. I think the phrase that is used in the terms of reference is 'the people of the Torres Strait.' In our first submission we took that to be a primarily regional definition and we explored some ideas about moving towards a greater degree of regional self-government. But we were also conscious, through the terms of reference No. 3, that there was some recognition of the special place of Torres Strait Islanders, including those living outside the region.

We became aware, through reading other people's submissions, that there were a lot of Torres Strait Islander people taking a rather different approach and addressing the terms of reference in terms of 'the people of the Torres Strait' meaning, first and foremost, Torres Strait Islanders. Therefore, a lot of those other submissions were in fact not looking much at further developments towards regional self-government but were looking much more towards this committee process as a possibility for opening up ideas about separating out Torres Strait Islander concerns from Aboriginal concerns nationally. That will be the focus of our second submission that we have been working on since that alternative interpretation of the term 'the people of the Torres Strait'.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for those comments. Can I just indicate that the committee has fixed a public hearing for early May in the Torres Strait Islands and it would be of considerable interest and assistance to the committee members if your second submission could be received urgently to give us a chance to reflect on it before we actually travel to the islands.

**Dr Sanders**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—I also indicate that if, when you submit your submission, you would like to see us again for further discussion, I am sure members of the committee will be very happy for you to do that because of the benefits that we will derive from your advice, which we appreciate and respect very much.

The thing that I would like to focus on immediately is this: in the discussion in the paper that you have given us, involving the development of greater political autonomy, you mention a range of options to change the governance structures of the Torres Strait. You also state:

Our sense is that the general body of Strait opinion will probably favour a fairly significant strengthening of the existing structures of regional governance within the Strait without seeking a move to full independent statehood within the international community.

I do not take issue with you on that at all, but, for the record, do you have any substantial evidence to support that statement?

**Dr Sanders**—The evidence we have is very impressionistic. I would not say that we have gone out to seek specifically to collect evidence about that point. But in the process of doing this research we have read fairly widely various pieces of documentation that have been on the public record over the last 10 years. We are aware that there have been a couple of calls for independence, some years ago now, which may on the face of it look like calls for separate nation-statehood, but our general impression is that the sort of level of strategic engagement that we observe among Islanders is much more in line with trying to get a better deal out of present institutional structures within the Australian nation-state than you might expect than if they

were serious about separate nation-statehood. It is very much impressionistic.

**CHAIR**—I will just elaborate on that. Again this is a formal matter. First I might just say as chair that, although we have to keep an open mind, from all of the discussions and from people we have spoken to—in evidence and through submissions, and informally—I think I can safely say that all people give us the strong message that they are proud to be part of Australia and wish to continue to be part of Australia. So that is coming through very loud and clear.

Just for the formal record, let me ask you this. It is the case, is it not, that your centre is regarded by many people, including indigenous people in Australia, as a centre of research with a lot of recognition for the value of its work. What I am leading to is that, because you are well known and well placed within Australia, you would have expected some evidence to have come before you to date to indicate that there is a movement to separate from Australia. But, since there has not been such evidence to your centre, that would speak for itself, would it not?

**Dr Sanders**—To some extent I would think that is the case. If there were a significant push for full independent statehood, I think we would have heard about it on the grapevine, in those sorts of terms.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. You can see why I just wanted to get that. To make those observations helps us in our reporting to the parliament of whatever conclusions we come to. Obviously, therefore, you see the existing political structures in Torres Strait as being the basis for looking at the movement for change and for substantial strengthening. How do you see those structures being strengthened. Have you got some details of the types of changes you would like to recommend to us?

**Dr Sanders**—In the first paper we prepared, which you have before you, we were very much conscious of the fact that the present structures are an amalgam of local government structures, which represent all residents in the region, and the regional representation structures, which tend to represent only Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people in the region. In a sense it was the question of how to move the regional structures beyond that limited constituency, to give them a more encompassing constituency and a greater legitimacy as full regional representative structures, that engaged us most in that first submission.

There was certainly some quite significant restructuring of those structures that would be involved in moving in that direction, not the least of which is that the Torres Strait Regional Authority is within the ATSIC Act. If it were in any sense to try to move towards a fuller form of regional self-government, then it would presumably have in some way to cut its ties with ATSIC if it were to attempt in some to represent non-indigenous people in the region as well. So there are some fairly major structural development issues involved.

**CHAIR**—Do you see the principle of representation in whatever structure is there—representing the interests of all residents, whether they be Torres Strait Islanders or not—as absolutely fundamental to the successful modelling of a governance structure?

**Dr Sanders**—Certainly in the approach we have taken in the first submission it would be. But, foreshadowing the second submission, it does seem to us that there is another idea altogether, which is to

interpret the terms of reference in relation to Torres Strait Islanders Australia-wide. If the committee ends up pushing down that track as a possible form of development of greater autonomy, then some of these central questions about the regional constituency become somewhat less central than they are in that approach.

**CHAIR**—Let us hypothesise—only; that is not to read into my words or question a conclusion—that the considerations, at least for our discussion, centre on the governance of the people living on the islands, primarily, as a major objective. Would you see it important and fundamental that, if that is the case, the structure be one that represents all people on the island, whether or not they are Torres Strait Islanders?

**Dr Sanders**—Let me put it this way: it may be that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the islands baulk at the idea of having their regional representative structures developed in a way which would give them a broader constituency. But, of course, if you do baulk at that possible development then the claim for those bodies to be in any sense fully-fledged regional governmental structures becomes less, because they clearly have an element of the regional constituency which is not represented on them.

So you have got to bite the bullet one way or the other. Either you are not a fully-fledged regional government structure because you do not represent the total regional constituency, or you have got to be willing to, in a sense, dilute the Aboriginality and Torres Strait Islander nature of the representative structures that you have and embrace those who do not identify in the region.

**CHAIR**—I think it follows, does it not, from what you are saying, that if you do not have a model for the islands representing all people then you must have two models on the islands representing the indigenous Torres Strait Islanders and the other people.

**Dr Sanders**—Yes. To some extent that is what you have at the moment. The Torres Shire Council, in a sense, is the sort of de facto non-indigenous representative body, which covers indigenous people in the inner islands as well. But the Torres Strait Regional Council and the Island Coordinating Council are the indigenous representative bodies.

**CHAIR**—So, as we go into the new century not far off, I guess your centre's advice to us would be that whatever we do, recognising the importance and sensitivities always, we should not create monsters which duplicate, triplicate, et cetera and therefore eat up the available money for services and delay the delivery of services for the people on the islands.

**Dr Sanders**—I would not like it to be implied that the present situation is not working, though. The present arrangement has some considerable strengths. There are different interests in the island area and the present duplication or triplication, if you wish to call it that, does at one level allow some of those different interests to come through in different forums and allow for them to be all aired in a way that is not entirely unhealthy.

**CHAIR**—If there was one structure on the islands which covered all of the functions and duties, and the relationships with state and federal government as well, would you see that that structure could, on the face of it, be designed to ensure that the various weightings of interests are nevertheless taken account of in a proper manner?



**Dr Sanders**—Yes, I am sure it could. It is a problem of what you might call institutional or constitutional design, but it is certainly not impossible. One would anticipate some pretty vigorous arguments or debates, but one would also anticipate that, like Australian federation, there would be some sort of balancing of the various constituency interests that people would eventually agree on.

**CHAIR**—Has the centre done any research to show a dollar cost of the present system compared with what it would be if it was not a system that overlaid and separated governance for various bodies and individuals? If you have not done so, could you do that to assist the committee?

**Mr Arthur**—You are talking about the cost of government here, are you—how much it costs to govern?

**CHAIR**—Yes, under the present structure.

**Mr Arthur**—No, we have not.

**CHAIR**—I am not sure whether your centre does a lot of economic research in these areas.

**Mr Arthur**—We have not done so up to date, I would suggest. On the cost of regional government, if we thought about it in those terms, no, we have not.

**CHAIR**—Would it be possible, without putting too great a burden on you? I am asking for the obvious reason that if the committee is going to consider various models and make recommendations we would like to be able to do so on the basis that we have had some regard to the very important issues of outcomes for governance and autonomy, but also the cost, because all the dreams of man could be brought undone if the cost is too high, particularly going into the next century.

**Dr Sanders**—I guess our approach here would be to think, in the first instance at least, of a more unified approach, essentially bringing together the sorts of levels of resource funding and flows that already exist. So in many ways we would not be in any better position than you, as a committee, to carry that sort of question forward.

It does seem to me that, through your submissions process, you have actually elicited some more up-to-date economic information than we have had available to us up until now from various government authorities that are working in the area. In a sense, perhaps at the end of the submissions you will be in the best position of anyone to try to put a bit of a global picture together on the flows that there are. I would not imagine that we are talking about anything more than, in some sense, coordinating those existing flows.

**CHAIR**—Can you give us any examples from your research to date of areas where people have not been given as much autonomy under the present structures as you would think should have been, or is, desirable?

**Dr Sanders**—The situation as you might represent it is that, in a lot of functional areas of government, operations within the Torres Strait have various advisory committees and bodies—consisting of

Torres Strait Islanders and others—in the region, advising them on various aspects of their operation. Most of those bodies are advisory bodies rather than determinative bodies, and sometimes the push for greater autonomy seems to be a push towards having a greater say in the actual executive decision making rather than in an advisory capacity. But I am not sure that that is always the case. Would you want to add anything, Bill?

**Mr Arthur**—The question seems to be whether they have enough autonomy at the moment.

**CHAIR**—What deficiencies have you observed from your research?

**Mr Arthur**—That is a little tricky.

**CHAIR**—That is based on the old saying that ‘If it is not broken you do not have to fix it’. I took it from your submission that you think it does need some fixing.

**Dr Sanders**—Perhaps I could come back in there and say that we took as the starting point of our submission the expressed desire for greater autonomy and, in a sense, we were not all that probing about what lay behind that expressed desire, nor about the substantial economic benefits that might flow from greater autonomy. In a sense, we took that expressed desire as an important thing to respond to in itself. I guess we saw that merely responding to that expressed desire could itself be a fairly major benefit. It may, in the end, be quite symbolic.

**CHAIR**—Yes. The outcome of greater autonomy you see as overwhelmingly beneficial. That is obvious from what you are saying.

**Dr Sanders**—Yes, but the benefit in the end may be largely symbolic. The benefit may be of the order that Torres Strait Islander people will feel that they have greater autonomy and a greater say in decision making processes where they presently express some sense of not having as much say as they would like to have. We tend to be of the opinion that there will not be any great change in the sort of regional economic structure or anything else that flows from this in the short term.

**CHAIR**—I know you are very familiar with the present structures. Last week, we took submissions in Brisbane from representatives of the Queensland government. They were very helpful to us and very supportive of the idea of searching for ways of increasing the opportunities for greater autonomy, and so there was no conflict there. But it was fascinating to hear them, in brief analysis, concede that on the islands there are, in fact, two separate forms of local government: one under the Community Services Act and the other one under the Local Government Act—representing different constituencies in some ways. They have agreed to give us, as a further submission, an analysis of the legislative implications of that and of whether the authority under the Community Services Act has greater power than that under local government and vice versa, and of where they differ. That is something we are looking forward to sharing with you.

**Dr Sanders**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—It was also interesting to note that, on top of that, you have the councils on the islands and

the regional authority and the advisory boards to all of those bodies, plus the state government, plus the Commonwealth government, plus ATSIC. When it was cracked open and spelt out like that, it seemed fairly obvious that this was a marvellous opportunity to try to bring it all together in some way.

That leads me to my question. Superficially, do you think that local government has the greatest potential to give people more self-reliance and eventual autonomy over their own community's affairs on the Australian model as we know it today?

**Dr Sanders**—I would reiterate a point that is made in our first submission and in one of the background papers referred to in that. It appears to me that there is a considerable degree of commitment to the existing local island councils within the Strait and to the Torres Shire Council although, perhaps, a little less. Among a particular constituency there is obviously a high level of commitment there, too. I would anticipate that that level of commitment would be built on rather than, in any sense, undermined. So, yes, the local units—all 18 of them—seem to me to have a very considerable role to play.

**CHAIR**—Yes. If members have questions, they are welcome to come in at any time. What do you see as the involvement then of state and federal governments in the future in relation to the government's model, whatever it might be? Do you see that it is essential that the model has a direct line, if you like, to both Commonwealth and state governments?

**Dr Sanders**—I would anticipate that that is the case. I do not think, from reading the public documentation that is available, that Torres Strait Islanders feel that this should in any way be a way of letting either the Commonwealth, or the Queensland state government, off the hook in being responsible for the delivery of appropriate services in their region.

**CHAIR**—What you are saying, in a sense, is that whatever model is adopted, neither state nor Commonwealth should see that as an abrogation of their continuing interest and involvement in the affairs of the Torres Strait Island people?

**Dr Sanders**—Yes. I do not personally see this process, or anything that might come from it, as having an enormous potential for reducing the number of institutional players in the Torres Strait. The litany of numbers of players is a fairly standard invocation at one level, but when it gets down to it, it is actually quite difficult to thin them out. In many ways it seems to me that the two things that are more at issue are, firstly, greater co-ordination between those large numbers of institutional players and, secondly, greater influence over those various players from the local people.

**CHAIR**—Let me switch a little away from that for the moment. In respect to the present arrangements of statutory responsibility of ATSIC, are you familiar with the way in which ATSIC serves the Torres Strait Island people on the islands and on the mainland?

**Dr Sanders**—Yes, we are.

**CHAIR**—In a general sense, one of the issues that has been raised with us by some people from the Torres Strait Islands and on the mainland from the Torres Strait Islanders, is their perception that they do not

always get an equitable apportionment of assistance through ATSIC. The committee has an open mind, I emphasise, we have not made a judgment on that. Have you any observations to make about that?

**Dr Sanders**—We are talking here about Torres Strait Islander people living outside the Torres Strait region?

**CHAIR**—Both.

**Dr Sanders**—We, too, are aware of the perception among Torres Strait Islander people living outside the Torres Strait region that they feel disadvantaged within their ATSIC regional councils. We, too, have an open mind on the actual extent of that disadvantage. We do note that—and this is something that will come out in our second paper—in raw demographic terms those Torres Strait Islanders living at various locations around the rest of Australia are in a rather difficult position because they do constitute quite small minorities within the regional indigenous populations, except perhaps in the Cairns-Townsville area, but even there they are still a minority within the indigenous population. Given that sort of minority status within ATSIC's regions, it is quite understandable that they would have those perceptions of disadvantage.

**CHAIR**—Yes, but the centre is not aware of any examples of inequitable treatment by ATSIC?

**Dr Sanders**—Like you, we have an open mind and we have started to do a little bit of work trying to dig out some actual figures on who is getting what in various regions and what sort of access Torres Strait Islander people are getting within ATSIC regions.

**CHAIR**—So, it is not a—

**Dr Sanders**—It is very difficult to do. It is not simple to identify.

**CHAIR**—If ATSIC continues to have a deep involvement in the affairs of Torres Strait Islanders both on the mainland and in the homeland—assuming that for one moment—do you think that there ought to be some changes to ATSIC's accountability and transparency to ensure that any perception of equity is at least visible and addressed quickly. I understand that there is no separate budget as such for Torres Strait Islander programs and spending compared with Aboriginal. That may not be the case; we are seeing ATSIC later today and will clarify that. Are you familiar with that?

**Dr Sanders**—Yes, we are basically familiar with that.

**CHAIR**—Would you like to make some comments about the desirability of that and whether any changes should be made?

**Dr Sanders**—We would be of the opinion that ATSIC does have a serious problem that it needs to address in some way because these are perceptions which its manner of funding regions does tend to fuel. One obvious solution to this would be to pull out some sort of separate budget item for Torres Strait Islanders, but that has its dangers as well in the sense that we very quickly see that Aboriginal people may then say, 'Well, that is your separate budget item, so you are not allowed in the general budget item.' There

are really some quite complex issues here that need to be teased out.

That, in a sense, is already partly the problem. There is this body within ATSIC called the Office of Torres Strait Islander Affairs and there is also this representative body, an appointed rather than an elected one, called the Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board. Because those separate Islander bodies already exist, Islanders feel that they already come up against the idea that they have a separate section of ATSIC for them. Having a separate budget item could fuel that even further as well. It is a very difficult issue—there are no two ways about it.

**CHAIR**—Its complexity is also made worse by the fact that some of the programs are for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and are administered or recommended by regional or local bodies.

**Dr Sanders**—Essentially all ATSIC programs are for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

**CHAIR**—Yes, but I mean the bodies are made up of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders where no distinction is made. You have got to factor that into it as well. Could you take that on board as part of your further deliberation?

**Dr Sanders**—That is very much the sort of line that we are developing in the second submission. The issue in the second submission is, in a sense: is it possible to divide off the Torres Strait Islander concerns within ATSIC nationally and start talking about a separate commission or something like that, if that is what Torres Strait Islanders nationally would like. Just to anticipate, we are coming to the conclusion in writing it that that would be possible if that is what Torres Strait Islander people desire. There may be some costs involved in doing that as well as benefits, but it would certainly be possible.

**CHAIR**—Are you able to give us any impression from your research as to whether the Torres Strait Islander people living on the homeland actually do want the Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland to run and have maximum input into the affairs in the community on the islands? I might say that we had some very colourful evidence from one of the islands where one of the chiefs made a very strong comment about the mainland Torres Strait Islanders who can go and get ‘effed’—the famous comment that no doubt will be repeated in history. Do you have any observations on that? We would like your wisdom on that one.

**Dr Sanders**—I guess we are partly responding to the large numbers of submissions among your submissions from Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland expressing their dissatisfaction about current arrangements. It seems to me that their dissatisfaction is as legitimate as the dissatisfaction with arrangements of the Torres Strait Islanders in the islands as well.

It is a slightly different starting point when we are trying to address their sorts of dissatisfactions and, certainly, in attempting to address them through these sorts of ideas about the possibility of a national Torres Strait Islander arrangement, it could well be that some of the sorts of sentiments you just identified among islanders living in the homelands would come to the fore as well. There are all sorts of ways which those concerns may need to attempt to be balanced. Again, we are trying to come to grips with that in the second submission we are preparing.

Just to anticipate, there is the question of how you would balance the representation between these two groups—the homeland Islander people and the diaspora, as one of the submissions calls them. Of course, they are very different sizes. We are talking about a group of over 20,000 and a group of under 10,000. But it is interesting in the submissions themselves that there is a recognition from different people that these would have to be balanced in a way other than by simple arithmetic and that the sort of half-half idea often comes up, even though the populations are quite different.

So it does seem to us that there are ideas in there from these two groups of islanders who themselves have different perspectives but who would each acknowledge the other's perspective as legitimate and may, therefore, be willing to work through some arrangement if that is what they desire.

**CHAIR**—Could I divide that into two parts. Would you take the view that, overwhelmingly, it seems to be so that both mainlanders and homelander want to strengthen and maintain the cultural links between the people living on the mainland and people living on the homeland and vice versa?

**Dr Sanders**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—So you would see that as probably a unanimous view?

**Dr Sanders**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—But the question of that opens up possibilities for recognition in whatever government's body you have for a cultural type cell, if you like. Let us be honest about this, there is division on the question of who runs the affairs on the islands. That is a major issue, is it not?

**Dr Sanders**—Yes. For instance, there is a worry among the homeland people that the large number of non-resident Islanders, if given an equal say in the affairs, could literally swamp them and end up having too much say, even though they were not living there. There is a real concern there.

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Dr Sanders**—Equally, the concern the other way is that the one really high profile Torres Strait body is only looking at Torres Strait Islanders in the strait and the diaspora people are complaining that, because they cannot access it, their concerns are not part of its concerns.

**CHAIR**—So one of the questions is this: suppose you have autonomy to the maximum and most desirable extent on the island, and that happens to turn out to be a model of governance—of whatever sort it is—for the islands only. You then have the potential to have a separate governance body for Torres Strait mainland residents, only, in partnership with local, state and federal governments with respect to the general community, or you have the potential to maintain ATSIC as being responsible for all indigenous people on mainland Australia, or you have some other model. Would you like to make some comments about that? Have you given any thought to that? Then Dr Nelson will take over the questioning from me.

**Dr Sanders**—There are a number of different models here, but I guess we have always maintained

that movement towards fuller regional self-government for the Torres Strait region does not preclude ongoing involvement of Torres Strait Islanders in indigenous-specific institutions as well, and that would be Australia wide. It seems to me that it is highly unlikely that, in moving towards greater autonomy for the region, Torres Strait Islanders—either in the strait or elsewhere in Australia—would therefore be excluded from the national indigenous organisations.

**CHAIR**—Undesirable or unlikely?

**Dr Sanders**—Unlikely.

**CHAIR**—Undesirable as well?

**Dr Sanders**—Undesirable too, yes. I think it would be unnecessarily dividing them off. I do foresee the possibility of a move towards greater regional self-government for the Torres Strait region progressing in parallel with ATSIC being just left as it is and Torres Strait Islander people all over Australia still participating in ATSIC, or some further development of ATSIC which separated out the Torres Strait Islanders more clearly from Aboriginal people—in response to the sorts of things we have been discussing in the last 10 minutes.

**Dr NELSON**—Dr Sanders, this is a fairly basic sort of question: what do you feel would be the consequences if we did nothing, if we did not change anything at all? The reason I ask that is that the more I have thought about it and read the various submissions we get, the more I feel that we are going to create more problems by moving to further autonomy, whatever form it may take, than whatever are the consequences of not changing anything as it currently exists. Could you comment on that?

**Dr Sanders**—I would just say that the general consequence of doing nothing would be that you will continue to get a fairly constant stream of expressed desires for greater autonomy. Equally, it does seem to me that there are all sorts of pitfalls in progressing the situation from the present. I think the approach should be a fairly cautious, slow one.

The present arrangement is not disastrous by any means, but there are levels of dissatisfaction with it which are being expressed and which would seem to me make it desirable that how it might be developed is at least seriously considered. But I would certainly be counselling you not to dream up some grand plan that potentially threatens the present situation. I would be counselling incremental development of the present situation, to try and improve it a little bit at a time over the next number of years.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Dr Sanders, it seems that you are really saying that the real, perceived benefit from greater autonomy is simply a feel-good benefit—people are going to feel better. What is the economic base that you see for further regional self-government? What are we actually saying here?

**Dr Sanders**—Perhaps Bill Arthur might come in here. He knows a bit more about the economic base of the region than I do.

**Mr Arthur**—There is no suggestion in our work that the economic base of any region would change significantly if there were a greater degree of regional self-government. So I cannot imagine that the area will

become either richer or poorer if there is a greater degree of self-government.

**Dr Sanders**—There may be some perception among the Islanders that they will have more control over some of the important resource decisions in areas such as fishing and tourism, but we are not convinced that either of those industries will experience enormous growth through this process.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Could Australia sanction, for instance, a situation where they had the autonomy to go into areas of fisheries which were clearly exploitative and short-term or into areas of tourism which had implications for the environment? Do you ever see this autonomy extending to national sovereignty? Also, do you think there is a possibility that the expressed dissatisfaction you are hearing is coming from a few people with a vested interest, people who want to extend their own power and influence? It is a problem I find with ATSIC everywhere.

**Mr Arthur**—I am not sure if that is the feeling that I get. I think that some of the people who are arguing and working for a greater degree of regional decision making are quite civic minded, not financially driven. It is the case that they do suggest that they would like to have a greater say in the utilisation of the natural resources of the area, which, of course, is where the wealth comes from in the Torres Strait.

Islanders are already ostensibly involved in commercial fisheries, but it is true to say that we have shown that they could be involved more. They are not involved in the most valuable of the strait's industries. One is drawn to the feeling that, if they had more involvement in the decision making over fisheries, they might become more involved in those fisheries in the longer term. I have to say, though, that they are involved to some significant degree in decision making at the moment through the Torres Strait protected zone joint authority. But in the final analysis the control rests with the Queensland and Australian governments.

As far as tourism is concerned, we suggest in our submission that there is some potential for tourism but it probably is just some potential. The Torres Strait certainly has to compete with the Great Barrier Reef. It is more expensive to get to the Torres Strait than it is to go to the Great Barrier Reef. I guess one could suggest that the drawcard for the Torres Strait is, in fact, Torres Strait Islander culture. But there is not a lot of evidence to date to show that Torres Strait Islanders actually want to be involved to a great degree in any form of cultural tourism.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Would this desire for greater autonomy not be fulfilled by local government? After all, local government everywhere has a lot of power. It actually has power to do things. They have got local government now. Why is it felt that this is not enough?

**Dr Sanders**—I think local government does have enormous potential. As to why current arrangements do not seem to be satisfying Islanders, the sort of thing that comes through to us is more a perceived lack of influence in some of the decision making processes of state and Commonwealth authorities that are operating in the region as well and have, in many ways, very much more prominent functions than the local governments on a day-to-day basis.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—I have one final question. This paper from ATSIC talks about special



consideration for the Torres Strait Islanders having greater autonomy because they are the indigenous people, and because they are the indigenous people they should have autonomy. When they leave the Torres Strait to go to the mainland they are no longer indigenous people. Why should they have any say? Why should they have any more say than I have, for instance, in the affairs of Murray Bridge, which I left 40 or 50 years ago?

**Dr Sanders**—It is an important issue. If one wants to be a purist about it then, certainly, one can say, ‘Once you leave, you have no more say.’ But it does seem to me that there are nations or cultures around the world that have become, through various circumstances, emigrant cultures and some of them have recognised the pressure from their diaspora to have some continuing say. The example we point to in the first submission is the Cook Islanders, the vast majority of whom now live outside the Cook Islands. But in the Cook Islands legislative assembly there is a seat specifically reserved for Cook Islanders living outside the Cook Islands. That is one seat in 25. It is not likely to be decisive in forming majorities in governments but it does provide some symbolic sense of continuity for those people living away. If we want to address the dissatisfaction of those people, that is the sort of thing we can come up with if they want it.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Surely they could address it themselves by moving back, could they not?

**Dr Sanders**—Yes, that is true, although there would be some pretty horrendous implications if a large percentage of those over 20,000 people living away decided to start moving back.

**CHAIR**—Would you just add what some of those might be.

**Dr Sanders**—Perhaps Bill is better on this, but the population of the Torres Strait has never in history been 25,000 or 30,000 people. The best anthropological evidence seems to suggest that it was a population of 5,000 people 150 years ago and 100 years ago. It has already gone up above that, and that is with the major immigration wave that has occurred taking a large number of people away since the 1940s and 1950s. If those people were to move back there, you would be talking about a population that was four or five times as large as has ever lived there historically.

**Mr KATTER**—Why did it stay static for so long, and why has it suddenly exploded now?

**Dr Sanders**—Bill, do you have any ideas on that?

**Mr Arthur**—We are not absolutely sure about that. Certainly the records show that the population in the Torres Strait has remained fairly static and the Torres Strait Islander population at large rose dramatically after the 1960s, when people moved to the mainland. We are hoping to do some work on this; we are actually a little unsure about why the population on the mainland has increased so dramatically. Some of it might be intermarriage or questions of identity. We are just not sure.

**Dr Sanders**—Could I expand a bit on those two words that Bill uses at the end. It does seem likely that a population that has migrated away is likely to intermarry more than a population that is on its home island and mixing primarily with its own cultural group. If the progeny of intermarriages identify in the subsequent generation as Islanders, then just mathematically you have got potential for twice as much growth. If every Islander marries someone from another cultural group and their children identify, then you have

instantly got pool of population double the one that you would have had if they had all married within their group.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—That is open ended. When do they cease to be Islanders?

**Dr Sanders**—It is a matter of self-identification. That is the other aspect of this. In the past there may have been less propensity to identify one's Islander status than there is now.

**Mr Arthur**—It seems you have a concern with the degree of power or say that people on the mainland would have in the Torres Strait. Am I correct in that?

**Mr CAMPBELL**—It seems to me that they voted with their feet when they left the Torres Strait and therefore they should have no impact. I think you could reserve them the right to go back if they came from there, but even then I think you are getting a bit—

**Mr Arthur**—Yes, but I think what we are suggesting is that the means of representation could be adjusted so that the link remains still basically symbolic—the link between mainlanders and the strait. In fact, I am sure you would have heard yourself that, when people talk about it, they talk very much in those terms—‘We are a oneness,’ ‘We are a one people’ and things like that. They do not say necessarily, ‘I want to have a say in the local government functions of the Torres Strait although I live in Perth.’ I am not sure if this is not an enormous issue, this concern about whether mainlanders will involve themselves in any great way in the local government of the Torres Strait.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—What a lot of them wanted to do is simply to retain the right to go back there with the income they had derived in Australia. That is from my assessment. I have a lot of these people in my electorate. But I think you answered the question yourself. I think the relationship is symbolic, and the symbolic link is going to stay there no matter what you do.

**Mr Arthur**—Yes, indeed, culturally.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—When they intermarry into a culture their progeny are half not-Islander as well. I have got some half-caste kids as my children, and they have had to make up their mind whether they were going to be Australian or French. They opted to be Australian.

**CHAIR**—With French accents.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—No, no French accents at all.

**CHAIR**—Mr Lloyd is anxious to ask a question too.

**Mr LLOYD**—I want to follow on that point. Your submission spends quite a bit of time talking about the political structures to deal with or to cope with Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland. I am heading back towards the economic aspect of it. What seems to keep coming up is that the Islanders are saying, ‘We want economic self-determination because we do not have the facilities that the mainlanders do.’

They do not have access to hospitals, schools and other infrastructure to the extent that mainlanders do. Mainlanders are saying that, 'Yes, it is cultural, but also we think we would like to be part of an economic structure for Torres Strait Islanders, because in many cases we feel we are not getting a fair deal from ATSIC.' Have you got some comments on that side of the issue?

**Dr Sanders**—In a sense, your job is to try to balance those interests and it is not going to be an easy job.

**Mr LLOYD**—That was why I was asking if you had any comments.

**Dr Sanders**—They are quite diverse interests. It does seem to me that the Islanders living in the Torres Strait have, in a sense, the sorts of concerns that you would expect to come from not just indigenous communities but from remote communities generally. The sorts of issues are about access to services that classically come up in remote areas and the feeling of disadvantage that a remote area has in comparison to larger urban areas.

That is a very different set of concerns from the mainland Islanders, not all of whom are in big cities but who generally do not focus on the access to services sorts of issues, they are focusing on issues of cultural continuity and cultural contact. So the constituencies that are pushing in on you as a committee are pushing you in quite different directions to do, in a sense, two things at once. I guess it will need all the political skills that you have got between you to try to balance it.

**Mr LLOYD**—I was just interested to hear if you had any comments on that. Another question I have goes back to the economy of the Torres Strait Islands because one of their problems is that they are not generating enough economic activity. My question is to do with the marine environment which you mentioned in your submission as being particularly important to the Torres Strait Islanders. When we were in Brisbane, the evidence that was given by the Queensland commercial fishing organisation stated that Torres Strait Islanders have access to the fishing industry. In fact, at the moment I believe there are two prawn trawling licences which are available to Torres Strait Islanders which are lying dormant because nobody has taken them up. Have you got any comments on that or how we can assist in that?

**Mr Arthur**—It is true that the two prawn licences have been available for some time and have not been taken up. However, I should make it clear that Torres Strait Islanders are involved quite extensively in other fisheries. They are about 70 per cent of the lobster fishery, they are 100 per cent of the trochus shell fishery and the beche-de-mer when beche-de-mer is being taken. But they do not have any participation at all in the prawn fishery. It is quite a hard fishery to access. It requires an extremely large capital outlay, certainly compared to the other fisheries which are extremely easy to be involved in. The lobster is the most complex of the others. You just require a dinghy, a spear gun, a face mask and flippers. There is more sophisticated equipment but that is all you need.

As I said, the prawn fishery requires substantial capital outlay. Also, if something goes wrong with the equipment, if your prawn trawler is full of prawns and your freezer goes down, then you are in very big trouble. I would suggest that to date, Islanders have probably been somewhat nervous about involvement in this industry. Also, truth to tell, it does involve a certain work regime. The work is fairly constant, there are

many days away from home, and people have said that they are not tremendously attracted by that.

To move to a more positive note, it is not impossible that joint ventures could be established with Islanders in the prawn fishery. I do not believe that that has been attempted yet and that may be one strategy for involving them in that fishery. Strategies for increasing their involvement in the lobster fishery would be much less sophisticated.

However, it would be remiss of me not to point out that Islander involvement in the fisheries is heavily underwritten by the Australian welfare system. Many fishermen fish part time and so the CDEP scheme or unemployment benefits provide a base from which they can move into the market. Of course, if you are attempting to change that then it would require some sort of means testing.

Many fishermen fish part time and so the CDEP scheme or unemployment benefits provide a base from which they can move into the market. Of course, if you are attempting to change that then it would require some sort of means testing.

**CHAIR**—Are there any other questions?

**Mr KATTER**—I would just like to make an observation that a lot of this was generated by the very rough regime that they had prior to 1984. It was a very restrictive regime and they really could not do anything at all—they could not own any land, they could not own any businesses, they could not operate any businesses. They were told by the person who had absolute authority, the Director of Native Affairs, Mr Patrick Killoran, that the establishment of any businesses was a theft from their fellow islanders. That was the mentality and the policies that he imposed with an iron fist upon them. That was done for 40 years—50 years if you include his predecessor, C. O. O’Leary. That being the case, there is a residual anger and fear that they could be placed back in that set of regimes.

The only other observation which I have on the gentlemen’s observations in their report is that there is a very strongly held cultural belief that the Torres Straits belongs to the Torres Strait Islanders, and anyone that passes through there should be paying a toll to them. That is something that I do not think anyone will ever eliminate and they will never rest until they have it.

When I was minister I said to them, ‘All right, if you want autonomy, what do you want? What powers do you want? Do you want education?’ They said, ‘No, you keep education.’ I said, ‘All right, well what about health?’ They said, ‘No, no, we’re not taking responsibility for health.’ I said, ‘Well, what the bloody hell do you want?’ But really what they wanted was the right to be able to take that. I think that was driven by a fear of what had happened historically and I think it was a very real fear for them.

They are just observations I make upon your report. I would back up what they said, too, about the fishery. I think that is very accurate information you are giving the committee. Just one thing I should make mention of: when they were free to do what they pleased, on Badu Island in the second year of operations the Badu syndicate grossed \$3.2 million—it was Ahmat, Bowie and Nona in the syndicate. There was negligible economy on Badu Island from crayfishing three years prior to that extraordinary achievement. They had some major setbacks, they got a little bit overambitious, but they are going again strongly now.

**Mr Arthur**—If I could just maybe respond to that and make one further comment on the economy. When we did work there in 1989-90 we suggested that there should be some sort of development agency in the Torres Strait as one strategy. That has never happened. But it is, in fact, the case that there is no agency in the Torres Strait dealing in a hands-on way with the issue of economic development. It seems to me it is something that is lacking, something that would assist people—I do not just mean financially, but in a strategic way—to get into commercial fishing.

**Mr KATTER**—I do not know any white blokes that have ever helped the black bloke stand on his own two feet, but maybe you know some that I have never met.

**Mr Arthur**—When I am talking about joint ventures?

**Mr KATTER**—Any venture at all.

**Mr Arthur**—Joint ventures are occurring in other parts of the country. It could be something that is a phenomenon of the late 1990s.

**Mr KATTER**—I would like to see the success stories. I have not seen any, but maybe there are some out there. The Badu syndicate was enormously successful and there were no white blokes involved there at all.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Katter. To the witnesses, I thank you very much for giving your evidence. I notice, again, that you have indicated that you will be putting a second submission in and you will accommodate us as soon as possible. We also have a number of questions which time did not permit us to put to you today. What I propose to do is to write to you with those questions and I wonder if you would be good enough to give us the benefit of your advice in responding to them also. They are questions that will probably attract fairly short answers.

**Dr Sanders**—Yes, that is fine.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for attending. We look forward to hearing back from you very soon on your second submission.

[5.16 p.m.]

**HALL, Mrs Louise, Acting Assistant General Manager, Commercial Branch, Economic Division, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, PO Box 17, Woden, Australian Capital Territory 2606**

**MILLS, Mr Benny, Manager, Office of Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, PO Box 17, Woden, Australian Capital Territory 2606**

**MYERS, Mr Ian Allen, Acting General Manager, Economic Division, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, PO Box 17, Woden, Australian Capital Territory 2606**

**CHAIR**—I welcome you all to give evidence. We have received your submission this afternoon and, in a private meeting that we had before this meeting started, we have admitted it and agreed that it be published. Do you have any amendments or additions that you wish to make to that submission?

**Mr Myers**—No, we do not.

**CHAIR**—Would you like to make an opening statement before members of the committee begin asking questions?

**Mr Myers**—No, other than just to note that the submission has been through our full board of commissioners and has been endorsed at that level, so the contents there are from our elected arm. Obviously, we as officers will be representing those views.

**CHAIR**—You would be familiar with the three terms of reference in this inquiry. I wonder if you could give ATSIC's views on each term of reference, starting with the first one: whether the people of Torres Strait would benefit from a greater degree of autonomy.

**Mr Myers**—The commission's view is that a greater degree of autonomy in the Torres Strait would be appropriate. As we have noted in our submission, we believe that that process should occur over time and that there is, of course, a need to protect the rights of non-Torres Strait Islanders—who are both Aboriginal and non-indigenous residents—within the Torres Strait area. So a proper process of consultation and a proper process of decision making would need to occur to better empower Torres Strait Islanders but at the same time protect and recognise the rights of others.

**CHAIR**—In response to that and with respect to the second term of reference: if so—as you say—what forms subject to consultation does ATSIC recommend should be implemented to ensure a greater degree of autonomy?

**Mr Myers**—The commission did not adopt a final position on what form or structure a more autonomous body should take. It certainly pointed out that there were a number of possible duplications and overlaps in terms of the various structures that occur there at the moment, but they would need to be

addressed through a consultation process. The board itself has no final view on what a more autonomous structure might look like.

**CHAIR**—On the third one: what implications would greater autonomy—as proposed by ATSIC, subject to consultation—have for Torres Strait Islanders resident outside of the islands, the homeland, that are living on the mainland?

**Mr Myers**—Again our board, in looking at that particular issue, believes that there is scope for greater autonomy. However, it does point out that autonomy should not come at a cost in terms of duplication or overlap of services, and that the question of autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland does need to be considered in the light of overall processes and overall structures that are in place to avoid extra or excessive costs which might flow from that.

**CHAIR**—Assuming that greater autonomy of some modified model is introduced on the homeland, in the islands, and turning to the question of the interests of Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland, do you see the Torres Strait Regional Authority or ATSIC continuing to represent the interests of the mainland Torres Strait Islanders, or otherwise?

**Mr Myers**—Under the current legislation, ATSIC has that role. Certainly the board did not endorse a role separate to that. Obviously, it has left the process open for negotiation. As far as the Torres Strait authority goes, for it to represent people on the mainland properly it may need an extended presence, which it does not have at the moment. So again those considerations would have to be viewed in terms of whether there would be extra costs or extra duplication involved in trying to achieve, say, a greater role for the TSRA.

At the moment, our board does not have a firm view whether the TSRA should or should not take over that role. It merely points to the fact that to change the current structure may incur overlap and may incur costs, and that needs to be considered as part of any review or any change in the current arrangements.

**CHAIR**—Do you think ATSIC is an appropriate organisation to continue to represent the interests of Torres Strait Islanders living on mainland Australia?

**Mr Myers**—I believe the structure that ATSIC has is capable of doing that, yes.

**CHAIR**—Does ATSIC maintain separate accounting records for expenditure for Torres Strait Islanders wherever they are—mainland and island, homeland?

**Mr Myers**—No, ATSIC does not. The way the program structure is set up at the moment, clearly the TSRA has its own special allocation and that is quite easily identified and measured. As to ATSIC itself, Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland are able to access any of our programs. In addition to that, there is a small allocation at the national level to fund special Torres Strait Islander projects of national significance; we can clearly identify those. But in terms of access to, say, our housing programs or infrastructure programs, our records are not detailed enough to identify the level of Torres Strait Islander accessibility to those programs.

**CHAIR**—Is that a matter that concerns the board? Does it feel that some action should be taken in that regard?

**Mr Myers**—The previous board certainly expressed a view that it wanted to look at the question of access of Torres Strait Islanders to our programs. There has been criticism from time to time, though we have not seen any factual basis for that criticism, that Torres Strait Islanders do not believe they are accessing ATSIC programs adequately. The previous board was prepared to look at a study to see whether that was occurring or not, but it deferred that process when this committee's terms of reference were announced because it was seen that that might duplicate what this committee is currently doing.

**CHAIR**—Could ATSIC make available to this committee, urgently, the records of its deliberations in that regard and any resolutions—

**Mr Myers**—Board decisions, yes.

**CHAIR**—And preliminary terms of reference for that potential inquiry?

**Mr Myers**—Yes, certainly. There are two other matters that I should draw to the committee's attention. The commission itself asked our Office of Evaluation and Audit to conduct an evaluation of access by Torres Strait Islanders to ATSIC programs. That evaluation has not yet fully commenced. They have set up steering committees, et cetera, to get that exercise under way; it will be under way shortly. You may be interested in getting a copy of the terms of reference for that evaluation.

**CHAIR**—Yes, I ask formally that they be available. May I ask also—you can tell me if there is a problem with this and we will discuss it if there is—that ATSIC make available urgently the discussion papers, memos and brief notes taken to the ATSIC board that led to its making the decision to refer the matter to audit for evaluation.

**Mr Myers**—That was not a board decision. It was a decision taken at the officer level. We can certainly make the relevant documentation available.

**CHAIR**—Good.

**Mr Myers**—The other issue that I suppose it would be appropriate to draw to the committee's attention is that we are also in the process of commissioning another consultancy, which is to look at access by Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland to Commonwealth programs other than ATSIC. That evaluation, hopefully, will take place over probably a few months but we have not finished the consultancy work to commence that exercise yet.

**CHAIR**—You will make available all the background papers and documents in relation to that process as well?

**Mr Myers**—Certainly.



**CHAIR**—Does ATSIC think that it does equitably apportion the funds between Torres Strait Islander people and Aboriginal people?

**Mr Myers**—It is a difficult question because—

**CHAIR**—It is a hell of a question to ask you, isn't it?

**Mr Myers**—Other than our BFS and housing loans programs, all our programs are community based. We deal with communities, not individuals. There are a number of discrete Torres Strait Islander organisations on the mainland, and they have certainly received funding from ATSIC. So in those cases there has been no difficulty at all.

You need to consider the fact that our programs fall into two broad buckets: one is national programs and one is regional council programs. The program size is fairly limited and therefore priority setting occurs. The priority process at the end of the day may make some people unhappy with the final decision making. They may be Torres Strait Islanders, they may be Aboriginal people. The amount of money that is available only goes a certain distance.

I believe that the priority setting process which ATSIC has available to it, such as for its national health strategy infrastructure money, is such that it is targeting its funds. The issue of whether it is Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal is not really the question in people's minds; it is more the issue of what is the priority of that particular activity in terms of relative need.

**CHAIR**—Does ATSIC think it is desirable to have a separate body representing Torres Strait Islander people in mainland Australia, as distinct from Aboriginal people?

**Mr Myers**—As I said earlier, our board did not come to a final view on that. I do not think that it is appropriate that officers should offer a view over and above what the board has authorised us to represent.

**CHAIR**—I appreciate that. Could you, on the committee's behalf, make a request to the board to respond to that question?

**Mr Myers**—Certainly. We can do that. We have a meeting in April, so we could put it to the board at that time.

**CHAIR**—If the board's response is that it is not desirable, would you ask the board to indicate the reasons why. If the board's response is that it is desirable, would you ask the board to indicate to the committee the reasons why.

**Mr Myers**—Certainly. We will do that.

**CHAIR**—We would like that urgently, please. Dealing with the day-to-day affairs of Torres Strait Islanders living on the homeland—on the islands—to what extent can people living in the region make their own decisions at the moment, under the present structure?

**Mr Myers**—Under the present structure, basically there are a number of authorities or structures within the Torres Strait. Obviously, there is the local shire council, which ratepayers are eligible to vote for. There is the Islander board and there is the Torres Strait Regional Authority. Under the Torres Strait Regional Authority, which is probably the one we are more familiar with, there is a process of elections each three years through the island councils. The structure that then comes together is empowered to make decisions in respect of funding, whether it be infrastructure, CDEP or whatever other Commonwealth indigenous programs are delivered through the TSRA.

Certainly in respect of Commonwealth specific-purpose programs which are delivered through the TSRA, I believe that the electoral base that is in place does empower Torres Strait Islanders to make those sorts of decisions. Where there probably will be difficulties is the level of say or involvement they might have through other processes—Queensland state government programs which might be delivered in the area, or shire programs which might be delivered in the area.

**CHAIR**—Do you think there may be some deficiencies there?

**Mr Myers**—I am not in a position to comment. I just know that with our structure, because of the electoral base, there is a capacity for involvement. As far as realistic participation in the other processes is concerned, I am not really in a position to comment.

**CHAIR**—ATSIC has made some reference to the position of Torres Strait Islanders leaving the islands for various reasons and living on the mainland. The question is whether or not, having come to reside on the mainland, the Torres Strait Islanders should be given the same rights to control their own lives as indigenous people as the model for people living on the islands, on the homeland, or whether, because the Torres Strait Islanders are living on the mainland with all the other people living on the mainland, they should be content with becoming part of the mainstream community. Could you make some comments on that issue?

**Mr Myers**—I might get Mr Mills to elaborate, but certainly it would be my observation that Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland still have very strong cultural connections back to the islands. It would seem to me that they are very interested in the sorts of fundamental decisions which are affecting the Torres Strait islands and they would certainly welcome some sort of process where at least they can contribute to the decision making which impacts on the Torres Strait islands.

**CHAIR**—They do not have any now?

**Mr Myers**—Not in a formal sense. TSIAB—the Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board—can provide advice to the TSRA, and that is a body which represents people on the mainland. But that voice is not as strong as perhaps some other structural forms might be.

**CHAIR**—So if there is an amount of money available, for example, to build a new school on one of the islands or on a number of islands, does ATSIC consider that Torres Strait Islanders living in mainland Australia should decide where that school should be built and the nature of that school—its design and characteristics? Or do you think that is a matter which should be left to the people living in the region, in the

islands?

**Mr Myers**—My personal view is that the day-to-day service delivery type decisions are appropriate to be made in the Torres Strait. It is, rather, some of the more fundamental, longer term issues which Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland have certainly indicated they would like to have a say in. Some of those extend, obviously, to native title issues; some of those would extend to the question of greater autonomy. They see those as really fundamental, long-term issues affecting the Torres Strait. People who now live on the mainland still see that they have a contribution to make in that decision making process, and certainly they have a direct interest reflecting their cultural background.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—What does ATSIC mean by greater autonomy?

**Mr Myers**—We have not sought to define greater autonomy. Clearly, it would include anything which would increase the decision making by Torres Strait Islanders in the events that affect their life. We would be looking at things such as decisions relating to infrastructure, decisions relating to the movement of people in the area, things relating to local government and local governance issues. We believe that there is a capacity for Torres Strait Islanders to have a greater say in that range of issues. We were fortunate enough to be here earlier, when we heard comments about whether that might extend to education, for example. Obviously, that would have to reflect local decision making, but I could certainly see that local government does not necessarily mean taking over all the functions, responsibilities and powers of the state and federal service providers.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—So what you are really saying, and what you have said here, is that it really needs properly functioning local government. But does it not have that now?

**Mr Myers**—To a degree. There are a number of issues which would arise. The Torres Strait area is physically unique. It is physically separate from the rest of Australia. I am not sure that a local—

**Mr CAMPBELL**—So is Tasmania, I might add. It is physically separate from the rest of Australia.

**Mr Myers**—Yes. I am not sure whether a pure local government arrangement in a conventional sense is what the Torres Strait Islander people are looking for. I am sure they are looking for something greater than that. I do not believe it is up to ATSIC to try and define what that might be. I think that really is something that Torres Strait Islanders themselves must define.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Clearly someone has got to define it, but it seems to me that, if you say they have got to define it themselves, it is a bit of a cop-out. You are going to get a 1,001 views, aren't you? How are you going to get a consensus on what it comprises; and when you arrive at a consensus, how can you be sure that that is going to be compatible with overall national interest?

**Mr Myers**—From our experience, it does take time to determine what is a consensus. I do not believe processes such as greater autonomy can be rushed. They do need to go through a process where decision makers can be satisfied that the recommendations they have in front of them represent the various views and are a reasonable compromise of the various views. As you say, decision makers then need to balance that

against national interest issues.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—On that final point, a view expressed that they are not getting a fair carve-up of the ATSIC funds: I have a large number of Aboriginal communities who have complained—and justifiably—that that is so in their case too. Is this not much more likely to be the result of local powerbrokers, the results of nepotism, the results of who is actually in charge of distributing the money? I will warrant that some areas of the Torres Strait are getting better looked after than others.

**Mr KATTER**—You wouldn't be wrong!

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Certainly I know that is the case in Australia, for those that are not getting it to say that they need more money. Perhaps they should look at how the money is being divided now.

**Mr Myers**—If you look at ATSIC's program structure—the way it allocates funds to regional councils, the way it allocates funds at the national program level—you see that we have only a certain amount of money for certain program activities. The first question is: is the funding applicant seeking funds for an activity which is consistent with our programs? Often applicants seek to do activities which, while being quite appropriate and quite proper, do not necessarily fit our program structure. So the first question you need to ask yourself from our viewpoint is: is the activity compatible with our program structure? And then: what is the level of funds available within that program structure?

If you look at our overall budget at the moment, you see that we are required to spend something of the order of \$350 million on CDEP per year. We are required to spend \$210 million on CHIP per year—that is housing and infrastructure. We are required to spend some \$45 million on native title bodies each year. The amount of discretionary funds that remains with the commission is something of the order of \$200 million to \$250 million, of which Aboriginal Hostels takes out, I think, of the order of \$40 million. The remaining funds are to pick up all of those discretionary bids and all of those small projects right around Australia, plus to meet the commission's running costs. So there is not a great flexibility within the commission to, shall we say, exercise an influence over decision making, which is perhaps what you were suggesting.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Nor is there any apparent ability to look at the spending by regional councils. That is where a lot of this misallocation comes in: some people get it and some do not.

**Mr Myers**—Regional council budgets now are fairly well at an all-time low. The amount of money they have available to them is also restricted. The CDEP is a part of regional council budgets; they are required to spend those funds on CDEP and nothing else. The same goes with our CHIP and HIP programs. Regional councils have very, very little in discretionary funds left any more. With the cessation of our community youth support program and the cessation of our community training program, which included in-work and full time professional study grants, the commission's flexibility, both in its program structure and in the amount of dollars that are available to it, is fairly restricted. I do not believe those sorts of issues arise or even have the capacity to arise—there is just so little in funds left.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Would you like some specific examples? I can give you plenty in my electorate, often where you have the regional manager exercising enormous power—even though he is supposed not to—

over the regional councils. It happens all the time and I suspect it happens—

**Mr KATTER**—Absolute power, I would say.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—I will warrant it happens on the Torres Strait islands as well. It certainly happens on the mainland, all the time.

**Mr Myers**—My observation has been that the regional councils do exercise significant decision making powers. Certainly the board of commissioners also exercises significant decision making powers. They are quite prepared to challenge the views or advice being put forward from the administrative arm.

**Mr KATTER**—I would strongly demur on that last point that you made. In my experience, I have been absolutely horrified at the immense power that is wielded by the managers and the infinitesimal power of the councils. I have had an absolutely appalling case in North Queensland, as a demonstration of this. To me it is just beyond belief that the public servant could be ruling the roost in the manner in which he is, completely overriding the locally elected people—completely and utterly.

**Mr Myers**—I am only speculating here but if a regional council wished to allocate its budget in a certain way which was inconsistent with the broader direction the commission has been given—the examples I gave before were CDEP or CHIP expenditure—if a regional council chose that it was not going to allocate its funds along those lines but wanted to allocate its funds by some other process, then the administrative arm would have no option other than to remind the regional council that it cannot do that. We are bound by broader government direction. Although the regional council budget might look sizeable, they must spend certain amounts on CDEP, they must spend certain amounts on CHIP, and they do not have any authority to move those funds off onto any other function.

So if that is the sort of example, I could certainly see that occurring. To my mind, that is not interfering with the project decision making. It is more trying to remind regional councils of the broader game that we are playing in terms of having to comply with reasonable government directions on where the priorities sit at the moment.

**Mr KATTER**—In one regional council in Queensland, the people in that area never went to any of the regional councillors at any stage. They went to my office and I said, ‘What the hell has it got to do with me? You don’t want go to your regional council?’ They said, ‘We cannot go to them. They’ve got no say. It is the manager.’ They would go to him and he would have complete decision making powers. When the regional council questioned him, he managed to have all the regional council sacked. The thing is farcical.

**Mr Myers**—I am not aware of any regional council being sacked.

**Mr KATTER**—I do not want to hold up the meeting and go into the details, but that is most certainly the situation.

**CHAIR**—If Mr Katter has specific issues he can raise them and we will try and get an answer back from ATSIC.

**Mr ENTSCH**—I have got several questions. First of all, with regard to going down the road of autonomy, there were a number of communities in the NPA, the northern peninsula area, specifically Umagico, New Mapoon and Injino, where there were people living in those communities that, through intermarriage and what have you, related to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Some of the communities, such as in Seisia, were prepared to embrace one culture or the other but there are a small group up there that relate to both.

Do you see this as a problem with regard to autonomy, given that you have got the Torres Strait people wanting separate funding for the Torres Strait authority and then you have got ATSIC and autonomy there? What sort of problems do you see in trying to define that? It is going to grow even bigger, because you have got the Kauralag people, who identify with Aboriginal culture, now putting in claims on Horn Island, on parts of Thursday Island, on Prince of Wales. Do you see that as causing a problem with regard to further advancements in autonomy for the Torres Strait island people, given that it is getting harder to identify?

**Mr Myers**—As we have said in our submission, we believe that the question of autonomy or greater autonomy for the Torres Strait must also address the rights of Aboriginal people in the area and must also address the rights of the non-indigenous people in the area. It would be difficult to imagine how one might come to a process where, at the end of the day, you had greater autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders only and not for the other residents of the Torres Strait.

**Mr ENTSCH**—I am talking about people that are able to access both sides or are wanting to embrace both sides. We have got the Torres Strait Islander people that are looking to identify within their own culture, separate from Aboriginal culture. Because of intermarriages, in every generation it is going to be even more complex. You have got another group there that associates with two. Do you see it as very difficult to define?

**Mr Mills**—I can add to that. It is a matter that the commission has considered in its submission, that the rights of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and also of those of both kinds of descent be taken into consideration in any developments or deliberations about autonomy in the Torres Strait. There are those families that identify both as Torres Strait Islander and as Aboriginal. What the commission has said is that, in the deliberations, those issues as well need to be considered and worked on; that the rights of people claiming both kinds of descent are to be taken into consideration as well, because you do have that small group.

**Mr ENTSCH**—What are your views on the setting up of a task force, the members of which would be state and Commonwealth government representatives as well as Torres Strait island region representatives, to negotiate an appropriate form of self-government for the Torres Strait? What are your views on that?

**Mr Myers**—I think a task force approach would be a very sensible way to go. Clearly, there are a number of stakeholders—not just the Torres Strait Islander people but also the Queensland government and the federal government. Consideration might also be given to whether you want to include the Torres Strait Shire Council in such a task force. It would seem that a task force approach, representing the key stakeholders, is an appropriate way to go forward on it, in order to have a proper consultation process and to look at the issues as they affect all the key players.

**Mr ENTSCHE**—The TSRA has been established for about three years. Have you seen any increased autonomy with its establishment? Is there a measurable increase?

**Mr Myers**—I might just talk for a moment from ATSIC's perspective. Mr Mills, who can talk not only from ATSIC's perspective but also from the Torres Strait Islander viewpoint up there, can add to it. From ATSIC's perspective it is difficult to measure. Clearly, as a result of the legislation introducing the TSRA, ATSIC no longer has any financial involvement. We have basically stepped away from that. We are seeking further to step away from any involvement with the Torres Strait Regional Authority. There is an amendment which will be proposed to parliament, to seek to remove the TSRA from the ATSIC budget so that there can be no criticism that ATSIC is somehow influencing or interfering with the TSRA's direct budget deliberations with government. So certainly ATSIC has stepped away from being involved in the Torres Strait area.

We do provide advice wherever that is asked for, not that it is asked for that often. The TSRA has used a lot of our systems, such as CDEP, just in terms of mechanical type actions. Given that, what you are now seeing is a situation where decisions are occurring at the local level, with no interference from Canberra or any other arm of ATSIC in that process. So, from my viewpoint, it would have to result in greater autonomy, at least as far as the programs go that used to be funded by ATSIC.

**Mr ENTSCHE**—Has the establishment of the TSRA increased duplication of functions of agencies operating in the Torres Strait, especially in relation to the ICC?

**Mr Myers**—In respect of duplication I will start with ATSIC. No, we closed down our presence in the Torres Strait and most of the staff took up the opportunity to go across and work for the TSRA. So there is no duplication there. We have fully withdrawn and there have been appropriate cost offsets going across to the TSRA.

As far as other structures exist in the Torres Strait, it would be one of those situations where, if you had an absolutely clean sheet of paper and were designing something from the ground up, it might look a bit different, but the reality is that there are existing structures. The purpose of setting the TSRA up was not to threaten or take over from those structures. It has the capacity, obviously, to absorb further activity or functions if that is the decision of the Queensland government and federal government, but it was not there to, shall we say, take over the activity. It was there only to take over ATSIC's activity.

**Mr ENTSCHE**—I guess that leads to the next question. Given the path that we are heading down now, do you see a continuing role for the TSRA and/or the ICC?

**Mr KATTER**—Are they separate bodies?

**Mr Myers**—Yes, they are separate bodies. One is set up under Queensland legislation and the other one is set up under federal legislation. The ICC is similar to the ACC; it is there to represent and lobby on behalf of the Islander councils who, in many ways, might be described as smaller local government bodies working under Queensland state law. The TSRA is a different structure. It is, in fact, funding the delivery of programs traditionally funded by the Commonwealth in the area. The duplication or overlap—if it is

duplication or overlap—is no different from what occurs anywhere else in Australia between Commonwealth and state functions.

**Mr ENTSCH**—The TSRA consists of elected chairs of the respective communities, and then the chairman of the TSRA is elected within those groups.

**Mr KATTER**—Warren, to all intents and purposes they are identical bodies. The composition of them would be identical.

**Mr ENTSCH**—No. The ICC—correct me if I am wrong—really is set up to look after the day-to-day requirements on each of the respective islands, like a small council on each island—

**Mr KATTER**—Yes, but I am saying that the composition would be the same, if the ICC consists of the chairman and one or two delegates from each island and, from what has been said here, the authority is the same, consisting of the chairman from each of the islands.

**Mr ENTSCH**—Each island has its own chair, depending on the size of its local shire.

**Mr KATTER**—The shire chairmen, you are referring to.

**Mr ENTSCH**—Yes. Each of those chairs is then part of the TSRA, which looks at the bigger picture. The chairmen each look after their own island and then the TSRA looks over the whole Torres Strait region.

**Mr KATTER**—But the composition of both would be identical.

**Mr ENTSCH**—That is correct.

**Mr KATTER**—The tasks may be different but the composition would be same.

**Mr Myers**—Perhaps I could just elaborate. The arrangements for getting people onto the TSRA were to reflect the voting processes and structures which the Queensland state government already had in place for the island councils. It was to avoid any duplication or doubling up of electoral processes. So what you have is a process where every three years, on each individual island, they have the ICC elections, where they elect their local councils. After that process there are nominations which then go through to the ICC, which is the body coordinating all of those councils. That process then flows into the TSRA membership. So the people of the Torres Strait do not have to go through two sets of elections to end up with two bodies. But if you look at the functions of the bodies, you see that one is local government/Queensland, the other one is for federal type programs.

**Mr KATTER**—I have got it clear, thank you.

**CHAIR**—It follows from that that one of the areas that could be analysed as a model might be that those bodies be merged so that they have a multifunctional operation but as one organisation doing both. Would you like to make a comment on the feasibility of that?



**Mr Myers**—I do not have a personal comment to make, but it would seem to me that it would be a matter for the Queensland government and the federal government to come to some view on.

**Mr KATTER**—Mr Chairman, I drew up that legislation. The ICC really is an advisory body to the island councils and to the state government—and, at that stage, to the federal government. But would you are suggesting there would seem to me to be eminently sensible.

**CHAIR**—It might be a happy marriage.

**Mr KATTER**—Shire councils are autonomous and sovereign in their own right as shire councils, and exercise all of the powers of a council; the ICC does not. That is the way they wanted it: the power was to reside on the individual island. But I would make the point to the committee that their powers are far more extensive than those of an ordinary council. For example, the community police force is very much a function of the shire council, so law and justice administration are very much—not exclusively but very much—a function of the council. I never knew whether it was a good thing or a bad thing but, anyway, it was the overwhelming opinion at the time. I just make the point that their powers are very extensive.

**CHAIR**—In Brisbane last week the Queensland government gave evidence, and one of the eminent witnesses was representing the Queensland police. There was an indication that there is a submission going to cabinet in Queensland today dealing with desirability or otherwise of having community police continue to operate in the form they do.

**Mr KATTER**—It was a very vexed question, I might say. You would always get a good fight about it.

**CHAIR**—We are getting towards the home straight. Could you go back to your commission and provide to us, as soon as possible, a statement which shows the number of applications received from Torres Strait Islanders on the islands, on the homeland, and on the mainland over the last five years? To give you a reason why I am asking this: I am wanting to see what information comes back to us to track that prior to TSRA you were receiving certain applications and what the nature of those was. The outcome we can talk about later.

Then you will, hopefully, be able to show us in this information the applications that ATSIC still receives since the establishment of TSRA, notwithstanding TSRA's existence. That, I hope, will give us both an illustration and an example of how the people on the islands are still having to access ATSIC either directly or through TSRA. Could you take that up with the commission and ask if they could provide us with that analysis? I have selected five years arbitrarily, but I thought I would take two years before TSRA and since TSRA to show us the pattern.

**Mr Myers**—Could I just seek clarification on that. If we are talking about the Torres Strait region to start with, I do not believe it would be too difficult to find out the number of applications submitted by that area prior to the establishment of the TSRA. After the establishment of the TSRA, ATSIC would not have accepted applications from that area because the act does not empower us to fund that area at all. In other words, we would not have—

**CHAIR**—Even discretionary funding?

**Mr Myers**—We are not allowed to. The act precludes us from funding—

**Mr KATTER**—CDEP?

**Mr Myers**—It precludes us from funding. CDEP is part of TSRA budget. So, basically, when TSRA came into place, they took over the projects that ATSIC used to fund there, they took over the program dollars; ATSIC no longer funds in that area and is not empowered to. What we could do is to ask the TSRA to advise us of the number of applications it is receiving each year so that you could compare those with the number ATSIC used to receive, but I am not sure where that would take the committee.

**CHAIR**—No, I do not think that would get us anywhere.

**Mr KATTER**—I direct my question to Benny Mills. Please, Benny, if you do not feel like answering it, most certainly do not. What do you feel about all this? It seems to me that the Torres Strait has already split away from ATSIC; there is no relationship between ATSIC and the Torres Strait at all, it would appear. But as far as splitting away on the mainland is concerned, I do think that there is a very substantial case for the Islanders being treated separately on the mainland as well. What do you think yourself? Do you think that is desirable or not desirable? There would no longer be ATSIC; it would be just an Aboriginal corporation and the Torres Strait Islander part would come out.

**Mr Mills**—I just might say initially that the commission's position has been not to change the current arrangements—that is, to service both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland, living outside the Torres Strait area—and for the Torres Strait Regional Authority to provide that same service to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Torres Strait area.

For the future, while not going away from the initial commission's submission, there has been considerable deliberation about what should happen with mainland Torres Strait Islanders. There have been discussions at national Torres Strait Islander workshops about whether or not there should be a change. Certainly last year, when members of the committee met in Brisbane, there were points made about the need to look at mainland Torres Strait Islander servicing more closely. There was a feeling that Torres Strait Islanders in the Torres Strait area could be given more autonomy, but certainly the question about mainland Torres Strait Islanders was still unanswered—how it should go about. There were a number of proposals put at the national Torres Strait Islander workshop, beforehand, to members of the committee on how Torres Strait Islander mainland people should be serviced. These have come forth, as I understand, to members of the committee.

**Mr KATTER**—Mr Chairman, I just make the observation to you that the social performance indicators in the Torres Strait are far better than in the European—if I could use that word—communities on the mainland. The rate of incidence of alcoholism, of venereal disease, of all of those things, is far lower in the outer islands, most certainly, of the Torres Strait than they are in Brisbane or in Cairns or Cloncurry or Dalby or whatever towns we are talking about. I would think that, if the Aboriginal communities are performing very, very poorly in those areas and if the predominantly European communities are performing

better, then the Torres Strait islands are performing far better still. So the gulf of difference is very, very large here.

I would think again that there is a very substantial case—though I hate to see splitting apart occurring and divide and rule attitudes prevailing; it could be interpreted that way—that the cultural gulf is enormously wide and to a very large degree the social gulf also is very, very wide. Therefore I would think that it is appropriate that we do look at splitting the two. That is my thinking at the present moment and I would like to communicate that back to you. If anyone feels strongly, I personally would say to feel free to argue with me the other way.

**Mr Myers**—I would just make one observation rather than debating the issue. While a lot of the indicators on the Torres Strait islands are good, some of them are shockingly poor. Diabetes is one. Female life expectancy in the Torres Strait is extremely low. So the indicators are not all good, not by quite a long shot.

**Mr KATTER**—The diabetes, though, is not a reflection of a cultural problem. We had the health task force before us last week and they were pointing out that there are some lifestyle problems there but they most certainly do not reflect the sorts of social problems that the health indicators do in the Aboriginal communities. I do not want to go into the diabetes problem, but it is not something that is a result of cultural shortcomings. I think that is the word I am after there.

**Mr Myers**—Perhaps the Torres Strait has some advantages, in that the people there still have their land. A lot of them are still able to maintain a reasonable degree of traditional food patterns in terms of dependency on fish, et cetera. Those sorts of opportunities are often not available to mainland Aboriginal people any more, and they are dependent on a diet and dependent on a system which in a lot of ways is extremely foreign to them. So it is very hard to compare the outcomes of one group with those of the other group.

**Mr KATTER**—You are not seriously saying to me that the social problems in the Torres Strait are comparable to those in just ordinary Australian mainland communities, are you?

**Mr Myers**—No, I was not making that observation.

**Mr KATTER**—I thought that you were going very close to making that observation. They are vastly superior to the wider community in almost every single indicator that you can put your hands on. And as far as diabetes goes—

**Mr Myers**—Could I just get some examples of which indicators you are actually referring to?

**Mr KATTER**—It seemed to me that you were arguing the point with me that these places were not superior—and I would use that pejorative term—to the mainland communities. I do not mean mainland Aboriginal communities; I just mean ordinary, average towns in Australia.

**Mr Myers**—The impression I had was that you were indicating that the social indicators—which I

took to include health—showed that the situation on the Torres Strait islands was demonstrably better than in many communities on the mainland.

**Mr KATTER**—Yes.

**Mr Myers**—I was pointing out at the first instance that there are problems in the health area which—

**Mr KATTER**—But that has got nothing to do with social. That is a problem which relates to dietary habits, which have come down over a very long period of time, and sedentary problems. That is the health advice that I have. It does not reflect high alcoholism problems. It does not reflect high drug usage problems. It does not reflect domestic violence problems. All I am going by is the health task force from the AMA that appeared here before us last week or the week before, whenever it was. They put down almost all of those health problems—which are quite horrific in the Aboriginal communities—to those sorts of problems, the trauma related health problems.

**Mr Myers**—So they were comparing the Aboriginal health outcomes with Torres Strait Islander health outcomes?

**Mr KATTER**—No, they did not mention Torres Strait Islanders much at all. They were saying that these figures are ten times worse than in the average Australian community. But I am well aware of the fact that the Torres Strait islands are considerably better than the mainland communities—with the exception of diabetes, and that has got a lot to do with dietary habits.

**Mr Myers**—I look forward to seeing that report if we can ever get a copy of it. I have not seen it, but obviously it would be interesting.

**Mr KATTER**—I am sure the AMA would be only too happy to provide it to you. It is a fairly horrific document, I can tell you.

**CHAIR**—There being no other questions from members of the committee, I thank you once again for your attendance here today and also give special thanks once again to Hansard and to the staff of the committee.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Entsch):

That this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 6.11 p.m.**