

**From:** Sherrie Cross [scross@sia.net.au]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 26 October 2000 12:56 PM  
**To:** atsia.reps@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** urban-dwelling Indigenous peoples  
Submission

TO: the Federal- House of Representatives Standing Committee Inquiry into the needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

FROM: Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation (membership: 116)

We address this submission to "terms of reference" number 4, which relates to the maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in urban areas. We submit the following:

Many Indigenous people have expressed an opinion that where migrant ethnic groups in our community have places of worship and other cultural gathering places, which provide essential opportunities to maintain and develop their cultural identities, there are relatively few places or establishments in urban areas where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples can pursue contemporary and traditional cultural practices. We believe that this represents a substantial restriction on the kind of cultural freedom that other groups in our community have come to take for granted.

While there are many museums, art galleries, musical and other cultural events, many of which celebrate Indigenous culture in a positive and respectful way, it is nevertheless not possible for many urban-dwelling Indigenous peoples to pursue community cultural practices in the privacy of a dedicated establishment, preferably in a bush-land location, where records of Indigenous presence, achievements and activities, both past and present can be kept, together with other documents and materials that facilitate the maintenance of culture. Privacy is an important feature of the maintenance of any culture, which cannot be sustained if the culture exists only as a public enterprise.

There are many reasons for the lack of cultural gathering places in urban areas, particularly outer urban areas.

One is the erroneous view that urban Indigenous peoples have lost their awareness of traditional values and pursuits, and in any case, forfeit the right to these pursuits by virtue of the fact of their urban location. Clearly, there are many reasons for settlement patterns, and the notion that loss of culture is a necessary corollary of urban location is an unacceptable assumption, which operates to legitimate the denial of cultural freedom and identity.

Another possible reason is the relative invisibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in urban locations outside of the areas with which they are usually associated. However, while areas outside of places like Redfern in Sydney do not have obviously visible Indigenous populations, they can nevertheless have a

significant Indigenous presence.

For example, the 1996 Census found that Indigenous residents in the Hornsby area numbered 262, of whom 44 were Torres Strait Islanders. Anecdotal evidence in recent times suggests that these numbers are growing. Yet there is no place where people can gather in privacy as a community in order to sustain and develop cultural identities. We submit that this be noted in the Senate report as a matter in need of consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Sherrie Cross, convenor, Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation  
Manel Lachmaiyi, Cultural co-ordinator, HARR