

with Sub 55.

CAPACITY BUILDING
INQUIRY
Submission No. 55...1



Reconciliation Australia

24 March 2003

Mr Barry Wakelin MP
Chair
The House of Representative
Standing Committee on
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

TO ATSCIA
B&W

Dear Mr Wakelin

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your Committee to discuss capacity building.

I thought it might be useful to pass on a little additional information in response to concerns raised by Mr Hasse.

An important contributing factor to limiting access to Aboriginal land for exploration and other purposes and in negotiating economic developments is the under funding of the key bodies which have the responsibility of working with native title holders and holding native title.


Under the Native Title Act representative bodies are required to represent the interests of native title holders and native title applicants. There is public evidence that these bodies are significantly under funded. As a result it is difficult for them to carry out much of their work in a timely and efficient manner.

Once native title is recognised the Native Title Act requires prescribed body corporates either hold the title or act as agents for the native title holders. While these corporations are statutorily imposed there is not provision for funding them. Unless and until there is economic development on the land giving a return to the native title holders there are no resources to permit the native title holders to engage with parties wishing to pursue activities on their land. This is a classic case of people being set up to fail. In the absence of funding for the prescribed body corporates there is a real risk that people wishing to negotiate entry on the land will simply have no one to deal with and people wishing to negotiate economic development on the land will not have anyone to negotiate with.

It is difficult if not impossible to build capacity to deal with these fundamental issues of social and economic integration in absence of properly funded bodies to carry out their responsibilities.

For your information I attach a recent press release by the Deputy Premier of Western Australia which expresses that Government's concerns about these matters. You will note that he quotes both the Commonwealth Attorney-General and me in the course of that statement. In each case I do not believe we are making a political point but rather making a factual comment on a situation which impacts very heavily on capacity building.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Chaney', written in a cursive style.

Fred Chaney
Co Chair

Encl

A small, handwritten signature or set of initials in the bottom right corner of the page.