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Submission No. <u>8</u>
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11 APR 2005

Secretary
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra Act 2600

BY: ATSIA

Attention: Cheryl Scarlett

Dear Cheryl

Re: Inquiry for Indigenous Employment.

I would like to thank you for your letter of the 24 March 2005 in relation to the above, as well as for the opportunity to respond on behalf of the members of Little Burning Mountain Aboriginal Corporation.

I also believe that your approach, in going directly to the Community Organisations or Individuals to obtain their participation and input into such matters such as Indigenous Employment, will hopefully find solutions not only to this problem but to other pressing issues that affects the majority of Aboriginal people, particularly in the outlying and rural areas.

Although there has been a great deal of input and information from the Community and members of our Organisation in response to your request, I personally would like to add my experiences to the Indigenous employment issue as well as the other issues which are important to the Indigenous people which are all intertwined and affect each other.

During the past 30 years, I have conducted my own unofficial survey and I have had the opportunity to speak to a number of Aboriginal People at a "Grass Roots Level" from all over Australia, the number I have spoken too, would probably be in the thousands. Therefore the issues, problems and grievances that is shared by these People are similar have, whether they come from WA, NT, QLD, or Peak Hill in rural NSW.

The general tone of the Aboriginal People, within this Community and other Communities within the District and since the abolish in of ATSIC we feel that the Government could better meet the needs of the Aboriginal People, through contacting each Community (such as your letter) as it will give each individual a "VOICE" on

various issues. Unfortunately this was not the case in the past and we were represented by ATSIC Councillors who we never ever seen and who were interested in "feathering their own Nest" and Community, rather than to Develop the Region for whom they were elected.

I believe that all the issues concerning the Indigenous people at a Grass Roots level has been overlooked and were incorrectly addressed, firstly by ATSIC, as well as the other Government Departments, through the implementation of the wrong policies concerning Indigenous people which in a number of occasions has had a negative impact rather than a positive.

Therefore until such Policies are developed by the Government to addressing the issues and problems faced by the Indigenous population, according to their Location and Tribal Identity and Traditional beliefs, I feel that the these problems will remain unsolved.

As a survivor of the Aboriginal Protection Board days of old, it is my opinion that the Indigenous People have made little progress in the Corporate and business world, or self determination towards securing a positive outcome for their future. In a number of cases the majority of Indigenous people have been held back by a Welfare mentality created initially by the past and present Government as well as the Local Aboriginal Organisations which were Operated by a Board of Directors who had little to no Education qualifications and did not meet the needs of the People, or the Objectives of that particular Organisation.

Although unemployment is a major issue for Indigenous Australians, I believe that the problem is more to do with the lack of skills, low self esteem and little to no Education.

I have also know a number of Indigenous People who have resigned from there position or who have simply walked of the Job for little to know reason such as:

- The insensitivity shown by Colleagues and their Superiors.
- If an Indigenous person is Sick and is off work the stereotypical phrase of " Gone walkabout " expressed by a Colleague or Supervisor on their return, is deemed as insensitive and racist.
- A number of Indigenous people are reluctant to ask for help or admit that they do not have the knowledge to perform certain tasks, and are left feeling inadequate, and inferior which is a legacy that has been carried around by them since School.

Therefore, the most practical solutions to Indigenous Employment fall in the area of:

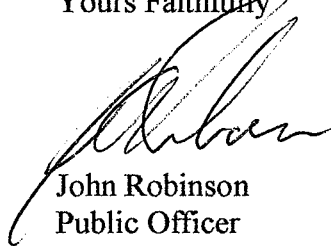
- **Getting an Education and becoming skilled and obtaining the Qualifications Necessary to perform the duties of a particular job.**

- **Create a list of Indigenous Staff wishing to Job share with a Colleague in the same Department at different locations. This will stop compliancy as well as develop skills.**
- **The Job share Principal is suited to Employees who have left their home town and fortunate to gain employment in a Government department elsewhere, however if the same Department is either in their home town or town close by, they can return home on a working type holiday. This hopefully will keep the Indigenous employment up, as well as the cost down particularly if the Department as spent money on training them in the first instance, such as Family and Community Services or Juvenile Justice.**
- **A number of older Indigenous People also prefer to work part time on a Job share basis, given that statistics show that the average Life expectancy is 20 years lower than the rest of the Population. "Therefore is there a Policy on Superannuation reflecting early retirement than the general population".**
- **There should also be an Indigenous Person at every Job network provider to cater for the Indigenous Clients as well as Centrelink Department.**
- **Compulsory training to sensitise non Indigenous workers ie: extended Family, racist overtones that are sometimes expressed meaninglessly.**
- **Compulsory access to relevant workshops and ongoing training.**

These are an example of some of the ideas that our Organisation wish to offer to you. We hope you find them useful.

If we can be of any further assistance in the future do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Faithfully



John Robinson
Public Officer
LBMAC
5 April 2005