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Ms Cheryl Scarlett
Secretary
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Scarlett

Thank you for your letter of 24 March 2005 regarding the Committee's inquiry into Indigenous employment. The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) is pleased to make the following submission to the Committee's inquiry.

1. Indigenous employment resulting from ILC projects

1.1 Legislative and Policy Framework

Under s.191B of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* ('the Act'), the ILC is required to assist Indigenous people to acquire land and manage Indigenous held land for the purpose of delivering cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits to Indigenous people. The ILC is subject to a variety of requirements with respect to how it performs its functions. These include that the ILC must seek to maximise the employment of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and must operate in accordance with sound business principles (s.191F of the Act).

The ILC's land acquisition and land management programs provide significant employment opportunities for Indigenous people.

The ILC's land acquisition programs require applicants to:

- clearly define a specific purpose that will be achieved through the acquisition of the land
- demonstrate that they have the commitment and capacity to achieve their aspirations

The identified property is also assessed to determine the viability and sustainability of the proposed land uses. When the land is purchased, the ILC retains title and applicants are asked to enter into a lease. The lease sets out a staged work plan, which includes ongoing capacity development activities and the development of a property

management plan. Grant of the land to the applicant is dependent on the achievement of negotiated milestones and successful completion of the work plan.

The ILC's land management program assists Indigenous people to care for, develop and productively use their land to derive cultural, social, environmental or economic benefits. Applicants must demonstrate that:

- their primary purpose is viable and sustainable
- the land is suitable
- they possess the commitment and capacity to achieve their aspirations

The application process requires applicants to demonstrate the potential for achieving long-term benefits and to enter into a land management agreement that includes a detailed work plan and reporting requirements. Land management support activities include:

- Group based planning (assisting applicants to identify and clearly define achievable goals for use of their land)
- Enterprise development (assisting applicants to develop viable and sustainable enterprises)
- Regional development (contributing to regional development processes to ensure that benefits accrue to local Indigenous landholders)

1.2 Taking a collaborative approach

The ILC places great importance on collaboration with Indigenous groups, other government agencies and the private sector to deliver projects that achieve benefits such as employment for Indigenous people. One example of this is the Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy 2004-2006, which aims to improve the potential of Aboriginal held land for a range of activities, including enterprises, by removing weeds and feral animals and by addressing infrastructure needs such as fencing and site rehabilitation.

The strategy involves collaboration between a range of agencies including the ILC, the Northern Land Council (NLC), the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, the Northern Territory (NT) Departments of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment and Employment, Education and Training, the Aboriginal Benefits Account and the National Heritage Trust. These agencies have committed more than \$5 million over three years to implement the strategy. The strategy aims to decrease reliance on government service providers and involves nine Indigenous communities and **more than 80 individuals** who have completed or are undertaking accredited training. Utilising the skills acquired through this training, nine Indigenous work gangs have begun tendering for commercial contracts with:

- local pastoralists (weed control, fencing, mustering, etc)
- the NT Government (road-side spraying)
- mining companies (site rehabilitation)

Twenty five participants have derived full or part-time employment from these enterprise activities.

Similarly, the ILC has worked with the Western Australian Department of Agriculture to provide support to Aboriginal pastoralists in the Kimberley region since late 2002. This initiative is known as the Kimberley Indigenous Management Support Service. As at April 2005, the service had assisted in creating **35 ongoing positions** and **65 jobs at muster** on Aboriginal pastoral properties in the Kimberley.

1.3 Support for viable businesses

In 2003/04 over **50 Indigenous people were employed** by ILC operated businesses.

The ILC Board has decided to greatly expand its activities in the Indigenous pastoral area and become even more proactive in re-establishing viable pastoral businesses on Indigenous held land. The ILC currently runs approximately 38,000 head of cattle and is the nineteenth largest cattle producer in Australia. It hopes to significantly increase its cattle numbers and provide significant training and job opportunities for Indigenous people in rural and remote Australia. The ILC will be working with various State and Australian Government agencies and the private sector to achieve this bold new objective. The ILC is already working with the NT Government, the NLC and Central Land Council to increase pastoral production on Aboriginal properties in the NT. This project has created a number of full-time positions associated with fencing contracts. As at 30 June 2004, **12 positions on stations** and **28 short-term positions associated with fencing contracts** had been created.

The ILC is also expanding its activities in relation to tourism with the aim of generating further Indigenous employment.

1.4 Significant factors contributing to successful outcomes

The ILC considers that the significant factors underpinning its success in achieving employment outcomes for Indigenous people are:

- Requiring Indigenous groups submitting land acquisition or land management projects to clearly define their aspirations
- Rigorous assessment of the viability and sustainability of proposed enterprises
- ILC involvement in owning and managing businesses on land
- Assessing the capacity and commitment of prospective employees, and where necessary, developing their capacity through appropriate training and support
- Effective collaboration with Indigenous land owners, other government agencies, representative Indigenous organisations and the private sector

2. Indigenous employment within the ILC

In addition to the employment outcomes of ILC projects, the ILC has been successful in recruiting and retaining highly skilled Indigenous people to work for the ILC itself. It is worth noting that the Indigenous staff members of the ILC make an invaluable

contribution to its operations. The ILC has placed great emphasis on the training and development of all staff. In the case of Indigenous staff, this has resulted in many officers achieving promotion within the ILC or being recruited to senior positions with other government agencies or non-government organisations.

The ILC currently employs 22 Indigenous people, which represents 23% of the ILC's total staffing.¹ Indigenous staff are:

- employed in all the Divisional Offices and Head Office
- represented across all salary ranges, with the majority falling within the \$40,001 to \$60,000 range.²

At present, nearly two thirds of the ILC's Indigenous officers are female, though historically the split between male and female Indigenous employees has generally been more balanced.³

Table 1 sets out numbers of Indigenous employees and overall staffing levels of the ILC since it commenced operations in June 1995.

Table 1: ILC Indigenous Staff Numbers

Year	Indigenous Staff	Total Staff	Percentage Indigenous Staff
1995/96	3	16	19%
1996/97	9	32	28%
1997/98	10	35	29%
1998/99	15	52	29%
1999/2000	16	58	28%
2000/01	21	76	28%
2001/02	25	85	29%
2002/03	23	88	26%
2003/04	20	85	24%
At 9 May 2005 ⁴	22	95	23%

The ILC's success in recruitment and retention of highly skilled Indigenous staff is in part attributable to the support provided to Indigenous staff members through its Indigenous Advisory Group (IAG). The IAG also acts as an important conduit for bringing the specific issues of Indigenous staff to the senior management of the ILC. In addition, the ILC has implemented an Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy (IEDS). Key elements of this strategy include:

- recruitment of three Indigenous cadets
- provision of four Indigenous traineeships

¹ These figures include non-ongoing employees, cadets and trainees. They do not include Board Members or staff on leave without pay.

² As at 30 June 2004, 15 of 20 Indigenous employees fell within this salary range. The majority of all ILC staff also fell within this salary range.

³ As at 9 May 2005, there were 14 female and 8 male Indigenous employees. However, compare this with a split of 11 female and 9 male at 30 June 2004 and 10 female and 13 male at 30 June 2003.

⁴ These figures include non-ongoing employees, cadets and trainees. They do not include Board Members or staff on leave without pay.

- annual surveys of Indigenous staff to determine satisfaction with ILC working conditions and to gauge the effectiveness of the IEDS
- all ILC staff attendance at Indigenous cultural awareness training

The ILC is in the enviable position of attracting many talented and highly qualified Indigenous officers to work with the organisation. Nevertheless, the IEDS seeks to ensure the ILC also takes on responsibility for training and developing less experienced Indigenous people through cadet and trainee positions.

I am able to appear before the Committee if required. Should you have any queries regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Paul Jenkins (Manager, Policy and Research) on telephone 08 8100 7121 or at paul.jenkins@ilc.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

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

DAVID GALVIN
General Manager