

SUBMISSION TO:

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Australia's relationship with the World Trade Organisation

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The submission I wish to put forward as an Indigenous person working as an academic in the field of Indigenous media and intellectual property for the Australian key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy. The following are outcomes from my research into Indigenous media requirements for the 21st Century. . They have come about due to my keen interest in the WTO and my participation on several on-line discussion groups relating to LDC.

The following is an email I forwarded to the WTO, which actually addresses the issues I wish the committee to consider.

I am very pleased that you are about to re establish your on line discussion forums. In the past I have participated in these discussions especially in relation to LDC. My work relates to Indigenous people and their intellectual property. I have found these forums allowed me to 'raise the level of debate' amongst Indigenous people in relation to their participation in a global economy. Had I not had the chance to personally participate, but rather left just to read the data passively there is no way I would have come to my level of understanding. I found once you dismantled the forums I lost touch with your site and your activities.

It doesn't take a guru to work out the importance of giving people a chance to participate in a truly active way if one wishes to bring about an understanding and acceptance of a new idea or product.

As my work relates to intellectual property it was by allowing a participatory engagement by the Indigenous in understanding and finding solutions to the management of their IP that has allowed me a certain level of success. I am now trying to push with them the importance of joining into the world trading arena, however, exceptions will have to be sought with your organizations. These exceptions are not to do with actually trading with bigger countries but rather to trade across boundaries in Indigenous IP related areas. Indigenous have a different mode of trade and have had these for centuries, it is just that the colonialist have only just to begun to appreciate the true meaning of the word intellectual property. Unfortunately a lot of Indigenous have also been 'dumbed down' in the meantime.

However, this does not relate to those who really understand and are the custodians of intellectual property. These people I find are very savvy in the meaning of trade and have already inter-country Indigenous potential trading partners. These links however, as

Rohpia (Maori) suggests are being hindered by the dominant cultures definition and restrictions on trade.

It is therefore hoped that in the future forums can come about that will allow trade-orientated Indigenous rather than politically motivated Indigenous having a say. Some of the most successful traders have been our old Law people who have become famous artists. They have learnt how to trade their art in a politically hostile world. It is the lead of these old men and women have given to the younger generation which I hope to imbue in my work.

INDIGENOUS TELECOMMUNICATIONS

POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH ISSUES

The fields that I find pertinent to such a study are as follows:

- An understanding of the development in international trading systems in the service industries and the role Indigenous knowledge can play without selling off Indigenous trade secrets.
- Highlight that it is no longer acceptable for remote communities to be deprived of basic telecommunication services.

The truth is that poor countries cannot afford expensive and inefficient service providers, and that the quickest way to upgrade your services economy may often be to introduce a dose of foreign competition and free government and taxpayers from that burden.

- The understanding of the coming mass digitalization of every possible service and those implications to communities

In New Zealand there has been an ever increasing range of essentially local services transformed into internationally tradeable products: financial and business services, and education and health services are cases in point.

- That Indigenous be allowed to consider outside service providers
- That as the media moguls flex their muscles on the political leaders of Australia; will Indigenous media facilitates become dumping grounds for out-data equipment.
- Will the future bring new forms of communication and convergence which are more suitable to the Indigenous reality and learning styles.

- Should there be a formation of Communication Cells lead by Senior men and women to decipher the manner in which communication systems should be set up in remote communities. For example, should the old people of Yuendumu be brought together to ask them what they would like out of the global market, rather than providing them with a system which was said to be advanced by mainstream media standards.
- Is the present structure of a national body representing the needs of the Indigenous media a viable body for the future when multilateral influences begin to effect domestic markets at the state and national levels. Should there be other structural alternatives suggested or designed.

These are just some of the considerations I would suggest that an Indigenous Industry which has the potential to be part of the most dynamic part of world globalization should consider. However, for this to be truly taken on, phobias about *big brother* should be put in their rights context. I'm afraid it has already happened, so get over it! We were once international traders in knowledge and so we can be again as long as we own the process.

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