



155 Bradshaw Street,
Essendon 3040
26-07-04

The Secretary,
Senate Select Committee on the
Administration of Indigenous Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make a submission to the Committee's Inquiry on the Aboriginal and Torres Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004 and the proposed changes to the policy on administration of Commonwealth Indigenous Affairs Policy.

Under International instruments Australia is obliged to protect and respect the rights of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to allow them Human rights and self-determination, recognising their First Peoples' status and the consequent rights.

Under these rights the Indigenous people should determine who represents them locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Under your proposed bill and administrative arrangements indigenous people will be denied the right to make free and informed choices for themselves and their families and communities. This will deny them meaning involvement in decision making that will affect their communities.

Your government in its review stated the need for elected Indigenous representation at a regional level. Indigenous Australians see the need for a National Indigenous Representative Body which understands their values and aspirations and is responsible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. This body should be the principal source in advising the government on Indigenous Policy and needs to have control over the provision of services to Indigenous people. When there is full and effective Indigenous involvement and appropriate cultural recognition in decision making results are much better.

Naturally government and mainstream departments must be publicly accountable for the provision of services to Indigenous people and strict guidelines should be set up to enable the Indigenous people to also be accountable.

In conclusion I trust that your committee will replace ASTIC will be guided by consultation with Indigenous people who will be effected and will negotiate to ensure complete endorsement by these stakeholders

Yours sincerely

Jessie Peart