

4th.Aug.2004

Senator Kerry O'Brien
Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal Affairs
C/- Parliament House,
Canberra,2600

Dear Senator:

I am Greg Reid, presenter of "Talk Black," a radio program that daily emanates from Bumma Bipperra Media in Cairns across Australia, covering thirty five communities and towns from Darwin to Melbourne. I created this program three and half years ago to give *grass roots people* a voice and its audience today is estimated to be eighty thousand.

What I am about to suggest to you comes from my heart, backed up by decades of appreciation and research. As a white Australian, my feelings and commitment to the Aboriginal Race were reinforced after my initiation into the Yolgnu Nation in North East Arnhem Land two years ago - this '**Rite of Passage**' has only been afforded to a handful of men in this country.

The key ingredient in my proposal is that- *the power remains with the Elders*. This has never been done before; causing every tried system thus far to fail.

Points to be considered:

- to keep the old ATCIC election boundaries.
- people only over 45 years of age vote
- they elect one representative of any age to a regional body
- this nominated representative can be voted out at a Special General meeting
- the representative report back to the Elders to carry out their instructions
- Elders could meet six times a year, or as decided, to instruct their representative
- representative would in turn sit on a regional council, who would
- in turn network/liaise with government, who will
- bring the many and varied solutions to the needs of the community.

The reason for the practiced system to break down is that the current ATCIC representatives are **not** accountable to their Elders; the valuable and unique people that preserve the knowledge. This new system would leave the Elders with the final power base, and the representative with the where with all - to go between a black and a white world.

A peak National Body would then be powered by a vote from the Elders of each community to pick a national representative from the members of the Regional body. This is similar to how it is done now - except the Elders vote for the National

Representative, **NOT** the Regional Council where all the politics are played out and deals done. **The power base always remains with the elders.** I believe that in this manner, you could even go as far as giving control of the \$1.1 billion ATSIC Budget back to Aboriginal People.

As you know, the Aboriginal system of governance lasted at least 80,000 years; some anthropologists now believe it is somewhere between 200,000 an 500,000 years. Quite different data from my school days where I was taught they only went back to 9,000 years - I believe white folks still have a lot to learn from their system of governance.

I know you are committed to find new ways that will work in mainstream society that will at the same time provide Aboriginal People with identity and voice in your Government.(After the elections of course) I would be interested in your feed back on my thoughts as well as attending any 'think tank' session you may be conducting in the near future.

Sincerely,

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