

By email: Roderick Bennell-Pearce [roderick@flashblack.net]

To the Senate Committee on Administration to Indigenous Affairs

Body:

In order for the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders issues, it is imperative that government departments understands that Australia is not made up of "One Aboriginal Nation" but by "Many Aboriginal Nations". So in order, for mainstreaming ATSI Affairs to work any replacement bodies boundaries will need to be based on Cultural and/or Linguistic ties and not on Local/State-Territory or Commonwealth governments boundaries.

This approach will be more culturally appropriate and will be something Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can relate to in a cultural manner.

The current ATSI model of using government boundaries has people of different Aboriginal Nations speaking on behalf of Aboriginals with whom they have no cultural ties, which is why a lot of Aboriginals feels the ATSI model was not representative of their needs. It must be noted that contrary to popular belief there still are traditional Aboriginals who knows the boundaries and correct cultural groups and clan groups which belong to what geographical area's of Australia.

Also, it needs to be recognised that mainstreams way of doing business is not Aboriginals way of doing business ie traditionally Aboriginal societies was based on caring and sharing and now we have been subjected to Non-Aboriginal ways of doing business eg cut throat competition and first in best dressed views.

It took 216+ years of struggle against "outside influences" in order for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to find ourselves in our current predicament of disadvantage in our own lands and the so-called "ATSI Experiment" was only given 14 years to succeed where no other government department could in 216 years. The next model which is put forward needs to be given ironclad guarantees and every opportunity to succeed without the threat of the axe from any future Federal Governments of whatever political persuasion ie the ATSI Acts needs major surgery and not complete amputation from the political arena! As once the mechanisms of elected representatives are gone they will never be replaced.

Recommendations:

1. That the ATSI Act 1989 as Amended is altered and not "axed";
2. That Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders do not loose our democratic right to elect our own representatives as a separate and distinct nations within the nation of Australia (similar to how the Vatican City is a part of by separate to Rome);
3. The notion of the Chairperson of regional authorities (if this eventuates) becomes the National Representatives.
4. That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have direct input into our National Representatives and his/her deputies;
4. That regional authorities are to replace regional councils;
5. That the notion of

multitude Aboriginal and Torres Islander nations is taken into consideration when stting up regional authorities; and  
6. That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional boundaries are taken into consideration when stting up regional authorities;

Regards,

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