

Don Stokes
21 Hodgson Street
Heidelberg
VIC 3084



15 August 2004

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

Dear Sir / Madam,

I wish to take advantage of the opportunity provided to me to make a late submission on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004.

I believe that the abolition of ATSIC in favour of any system which reduces the capacity for Aboriginal self determination and representation will worsen the already scandalous condition of Aboriginal existence.

Since white settlement Indigenous Australians have endured massacres, the theft of their lands and resources, and of their children.

The resulting culture of despair evident in much of Aboriginal society has worsened under the Howard Government's administration.

Since coming to power this government has demonstrated a racist hostility towards Indigenous Australians, eg;

- Its' divisive responses to the High Court rulings on Terra Nullius and WIK.
- Its relentless efforts to render Native Title inoperative.
- It has repeatedly prevented proper funding being applied to the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs.
- Depriving Aboriginal communities of land title in exchange of desperately needed medical equipment.
- The current proposal to abolish the Aboriginal Legal Service.
- The failure to apologise for the Stolen Generation.

ATSIC had many faults and to a degree mirrored the dysfunction evident in the wider Indigenous community, however a government sympathetic to Indigenous interests would have committed resources towards strengthening community representation, not replacing it with another wave of white paternalism in the form of mainstream delivery services.

Aboriginal people are entitled to the right to representation and self determination via a national body, and to the enjoyment of their culture and identity as Indigenous people.

I pray you recommend a replacement system consistent with these rights.

Thankyou for considering this submission.

Yours Sincerely,

Don Stokes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Don Stokes', written over a horizontal line.