

Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group  
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30 August 2004

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

Dear Sir/Madam

The decisions by both the Federal Government and the Labor Opposition to abolish ATSIC have the potential to reduce Aboriginal and Islander voices at the National level. The Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group (NASG) is concerned to ensure that this not happen. NASG has consulted a range of Aboriginal groups in the Newcastle area for many years. Together with these groups we seek that, whatever structures are eventually established to deal with Indigenous Affairs, they provide for

- 1 A large measure of self determination regarding the identification of needs for, and the provision of services to Indigenous people, both at the National and at the Regional levels;
- 2 Comprehensive consultation processes right down to the local and individual levels to facilitate the allocation of resources to where they are most needed;
- 3 Good training and support services for Indigenous staff and representatives to enable them to fulfil the challenging tasks they face in learning new skills, and meeting new challenges, expectations and auditing requirements;
- 4 Addressing the chronic needs in Indigenous communities for employment, reducing substance abuse, and providing family and extended family support;
- 5 Continuation of successful programs such as the CDEP;
- 6 Provision of good legal support services, particularly given the high incarceration rates coupled with low morale, high levels of unemployment and low levels of education in Indigenous communities. Such legal services to be based on cultural understanding and sensitivities to local situations, not on commercial tender and narrow expertise alone;
- 7 Recognition of, and respect for, the unique position of the Indigenous peoples of Australia, and their cultures and values. This will have ramifications for all mainstreamed services previously supervised by ATSIC

The NASG is not in a position to recommend specific structures but hopes that the above parameters will help the Committee in its deliberations.

Yours faithfully

Stan Masterson  
President.