

**Select Committee on the Administration of
Indigenous Affairs**

**Inquiry into the Administration of Indigenous
Affairs**

Submission No: 224

**Ms Clare Martin
Chief Minister
Minister for Indigenous Affairs
Parliament House
DARWIN NT 0800**

**Work Telephone: (08) 8901 4000
Fax Number:**

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**CHIEF MINISTER
MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

PARLIAMENT HOUSE
DARWIN NT 0800
TELEPHONE: (08) 8901 4000

GPO BOX 3146
DARWIN NT 0801
FACSIMILE: (08) 8901 4099
chiefminister.nt@nt.gov.au

Senator Trish Crossin
Chair
Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator *Trish*

I refer to the Senate Inquiry into the Administration of Indigenous Affairs' Public Hearing held in Darwin on Tuesday, 24 August 2004 and the Northern Territory Government's Submission to this Inquiry and, in particular, draw the Committee's attention to the questions posed in your capacity as Chair of the Committee to Commissioner Hill at paragraph 5, page 3, of the Transcript.

The said question states that the Northern Territory Government "are advocating that the Administration of Indigenous Affairs should be a State or Territory responsibility similar to the way they administer Local Government".

This assertion is not consistent with the Northern Territory Government's Submission. You will also note that in his evidence at page 16 paragraph 11, Mr Neil Westbury, Executive Director of the Office of Indigenous Policy, stated that the Northern Territory Government is not seeking the total devolution of the administration of Aboriginal affairs to State and Territory Governments and further at page 17, paragraph 8, by further pointing out that the Northern Territory Government believes that "indigenous Affairs is a responsibility shared by all levels of Government".

The issue raised in our Submission was that as a result of historical arrangements both the Commonwealth and Northern Territory have maintained co-existing arrangements for the incorporation of Indigenous organisations. In the case of the Commonwealth's *Councils and Associations Act 1976*, the Act has not been reformed since its original passage despite a number of reviews recommending significant amendments. This was highlighted in the most recent review of ATSIIC which pointed to the plethora of Aboriginal organisations created over the last 30 years and the associated governance problems that arise, particularly in respect to compliance and accountability.

The Northern Territory Government's Submission further points out there is increasing recognition that governance arrangements are crucial components in providing successful and economic outcomes and the continuation of confused roles and responsibilities between the Australian and State and Territory Governments is extremely problematic and impedes successful outcomes.

Given "Stronger Regions, Stronger Futures Strategy" and that Local Government is essentially a State or Territory responsibility our Submission to the Inquiry pointed out that it would be preferable that future arrangements for the incorporation of Indigenous organisations at the local level should be primarily a State or Territory responsibility.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C' and 'M'.

CLARE MARTIN

27.9.04