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20<sup>th</sup> July 2004

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inquiry on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004  
and proposed related changes to the administration of Commonwealth  
Indigenous affairs policy

I believe that the Australian Government has the responsibility to ensure that the First Peoples determine who represents them locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. The current bill and proposed administrative arrangements will deny them this.

Without this ability to determine their representation they are denied meaningful participation in decision-making affecting their lives and communities.

Our history since white settlement repeatedly has shown that the good work and effort by other Australians 'on behalf of' First Peoples has not achieved its aims when they denied them their rights and responsibilities. This has been the case for improving health, welfare, education and economic development.

The way forward needs to include a National Representative Advocacy and Policy Advice to Government, body that has been formed with the informed consent of First Peoples.

The Australian Government representing all Australians is to continue to embrace the enormous challenge to create a community in which everyone is respected rather than abandon that challenge. To have an ancient people living in harmony with peoples from later civilisations, is not the work of a mere 200 years. We late arrivals have a lot to learn, which seems strange to us when we hold the power. However it is just as much for our well being as that of the First Peoples that we need to have enough confidence to share representation and power.

I urge the Government to do so.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marjon Martin', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Marjon Martin