



PO Box 492
ENFIELD NSW
AUSTRALIA 2136
July 26, 2004

Mr Jonathan Curtis,
The Secretary,
Senate Committee on Indigenous Affairs,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Curtis,

We have been involved for many years in Organisations which seek to support Aboriginal and Torres Island Peoples in their quest for justice. One of the principal lessons we have learnt is that Indigenous People must have the ability to make their own decisions in matters that affect them. Anything else is paternalism.

This means that the decisions of your Committee on the ATSIC Amendment Bill **must be based on** consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal People at all levels and under their own terms. If so-called "representative" bodies are chosen by Governments (as is proposed in the Bill) any such advisory bodies will have no credibility.

The Government set up a Review of ATSIC but ignored its findings in this Bill. Aboriginal people admitted that the previous ATSIC had shortcomings, but they, and the Review, were clear that any body set up in its place must be elected by Aborigines themselves and not imposed on them.

Finally, it is obvious that taking away control of services from ATSIC and mainstreaming them is not the answer. Unless these services are subject to control and scrutiny by Indigenous-elected representatives, then they will disappear into the generic service model, and not be aimed at the real needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples

We hope that these ideas are helpful to you Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Anne and Bill Byrne

Handwritten signature of Anne Byrne in cursive script.

Handwritten signature of Bill Byrne in cursive script.

Tel: 02) 9747 2878

email:anneandbill@bigpond.com