

Jeff McKinnon,  
25 Cracroft Street,  
Longford, 7301.

20 July, 2004.



The Secretary,  
Select Senate Committee,  
Administration of Indigenous Affairs,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, 2600.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee's Inquiry on the ATSI Amendment Bill 2004 and related proposals regarding indigenous affairs policy.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples of Australia have an inherent right to First Peoples' status and self-determination. Central to these rights is the capacity to appoint their own representatives locally, regionally and nationally. The respecting of indigenous rights does not divide the nation. Rather it enhances our traditional values of justice and a "fair go" for all.

The current Bill and proposed administrative arrangements would deny these internationally recognised fundamental rights. Our indigenous peoples would have very little opportunity to address the continuing injustices faced by their communities since white settlement of this continent.

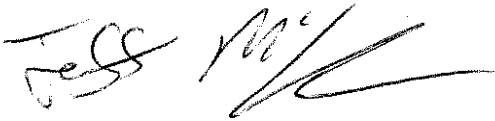
The Government's own review of ATSI endorsed the need for national elected indigenous representation as well as greater control at a regional level. This reflected the desires of both Aboriginal communities across the nation and many non-indigenous Australians.

A national indigenous representative body that is democratic, open, transparent and accountable to our indigenous peoples will best serve our nation. The primary roles of such a body should be representation and advocacy, the development of government indigenous policy and the provision of basic services to indigenous communities.

Self-determination within the structures of the wider society is the best way to address the grave social, health, education and employment crises within indigenous Australia. A return to mainstreaming of services is in fact a return to the paternalism of the past that has blighted our history.

I call upon the Committee to uphold the human rights of Australia's indigenous communities by rejecting the Bill and the proposed associated administrative changes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff McKinnon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff McKinnon.