



30/07/04

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

Dear Secretary

The Victorian Coalition of ABI Service Providers (VCASP) would like to register its opposition to any decision to disband the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), without an agreed representative alternative for Aboriginal Australians in its place.

The Aboriginal community has made it clear to us that culturally relevant solutions must be found to a range of complex issues, but they depend upon having an independent self-determining voice in this community.

We represent a sector that is currently attempting to find effective ways of providing services to the Koori communities in Victoria affected by Acquired Brain Injury. We are aware that unless the Australian community supports an independent voice for the Aboriginal communities, achieving outcomes in particular health issues such as ABI remain elusive.

In an era when there is a stated commitment of Government to the genuine involvement of and partnership with communities, the disbanding of ATSIC sets all of us back in our attempts to achieve better health outcomes for indigenous citizens.

The Federal Government's recent proposal to disband ATSIC seems to directly contradict the recommendations of its own independent review, to have a representative Indigenous voice to all levels of government. If ATSIC is not the solution, then disbanding it unilaterally does nothing in the development of programs and policies for Indigenous Australians. Mainstreaming of services has proven inadequate in the past, so is no solution now.

Solutions to key health issues such as ABI in the Aboriginal community are simply not going to be on the agenda while the one attempt at an independent Indigenous voice that we've had in Australia is disbanded without any realistic

alternative, determined in consultation with Indigenous stakeholders, being in place.

Yours sincerely

Tom Worsnop
Chair,
VCASP

Contacts:

VCASP
P.O. Box 102
Mitcham, Vic 3132

Tel: (03) 9884 8973
Fax: (03) 9893 0386
Email: vcasp@netspace.net.au