

Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Reference Committee on the Inquiry on progress towards national reconciliation.

In 2001 and 2002 the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has published the 2000 and 2001 Social Justice Reports.

Both Reports include a chapter each dealing with the issue of reconciliation:

Chapter 2: Reconciliation and human rights of the 2000 Report deals with role of the past in the reconciliation process and with reconciliation as a human rights issue;

Chapter 6: Reconciliation progress one year on of the 2001 Report with the progress of reconciliation and the government's failure to respond to the 2000 Report.

I have read both Reports and I fully agree with their contents, especially with the 2001 Report's criticism of the government's 'practical reconciliation' as being "ultimately assimilationist in its approach".



I also fully agree with the two Reports' recommendations and strongly object to the Federal Government's refusal to implement them.

Consequently I submit to the Committee that the Committee accepts the 2000 and the 2001 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner's Social Justice Reports and recommend to Parliament that the Commissioner's recommendations be implemented fully.

I also wish to draw the Committee attention to the Draft National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, June 1992.

Section D, "Providing for Equity" of this Discussion Paper points out that the synopsis of the Ecologically Sustainable Development reports' recommendations is that the Report "recommended mechanisms designed to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's capacity to make choices about their future and to sustain those choices. It was recognised that this objective would require strategies for the empowerment of Aborigines; the expansion of understanding and support from the broader community, including recognition of the unique position of the first Australians;

and the creation of self-sustaining economic opportunities to break the chain of dependence of Aboriginal people."

Ecologically Sustainable Development is now accepted by Australia as the basis of its policies. Both social and cultural sustainabilities are included in the ecologically sustainable development as two of its four pillars of wisdom (David Yeulcan & Debra Wilkinson - "Resetting the Compass, Australia's Journey Towards Sustainability"; CSIRO, 2000).

1 Yet the government's actions with respect to the amendments to the native title and in opposing the Yorta Yorta Indigenous Nation's High Court native title case shows clearly that it is opposed to the achievement of equity for the indigenous people and to their empowerment and hence to the achievement of ecologically sustainable development.

1 I therefore submit that the government re-examines its stand with respect to Aboriginal sovereignty, native title and treaty so that these issues are addressed properly in terms of social justice and not as they have been from the beginning of the colonisation of ~~Aborig~~ Aborigines to the present day within the

policy "aimed at the disempowering of Aborigines
so that they would not pose any future social
and economic threat to white society" (Quentin
Beresford & Paul Omai - "Our State of Mind";
Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1998).

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