

**Parliamentary Joint Committee on
Native Title and the Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Land Fund**

**Indigenous Land Corporation Annual
Report 1999-2000**

Submission No: 3c

19 June 2001

Mr R G Haebich

Acting Chief Executive Officer

Indigenous Land Corporation

PO Box 586

Curtin ACT 2605

 02 6269 2500  02 6260 3899

E-mail:



INDIGENOUS LAND CORPORATION
ABN 59 912 679 254



LAND ENTERPRISE AUSTRALIA PTY LTD
ABN 32 084 704 423

19 June 2001

Mr Peter Grundy
Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on
Native Title and the Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Land Fund
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Fax 02 6277 5706

Dear Mr Grundy

PUBLIC HEARING – 18 JUNE 2001

At yesterday's hearing I undertook to provide the Committee with a copy of the Rogers report which I understood the Board would be receiving from Mr Rogers later that evening.

Mr Rogers did meet with the Board on the evening of 18 June 2001 and informed the Board that he had found no evidence of criminal conduct or illegal activity.

Mr Rogers, however, did not deliver his final report to the Board as the Board accepted his recommendation that legal advice should first be sought in relation to individuals named in the report.

For your assistance, a copy of the media release issued by the ILC late yesterday is enclosed.

In the circumstances it is obvious that I am not in a position to provide a copy of the report to your Committee as neither myself nor the Board have as yet seen or received a copy of that report.

Yours sincerely


R G HAEBICH
Acting Chief Executive Officer



INDIGENOUS LAND CORPORATION
ABN 59 712 679 254



LAND ENTERPRISE AUSTRALIA PTY LTD
ABN 32 084 704 423

MEDIA RELEASE
Monday 18 June 2001

ILC CLEARED OF ROEBUCK PLAINS ALLEGATIONS

The Board of the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) has been categorically cleared of all allegations surrounding its 1999 acquisition of the Roebuck Plains pastoral property in Western Australia.

Former NSW Chief Judge, Mr Andrew Rogers QC, late today briefed the Board on the findings of his independent inquiry and stated he had found absolutely nothing to support claims of criminal conduct or illegal behaviour.

This confirms the opinion of the Australian National Audit Office that examined the purchase at the end of 1999 and found that even though the purchase had not adhered strictly to ILC policies and procedures, there had been no evidence of illegality.

"The ILC Board is obviously pleased that Mr Rogers' inquiries have objectively laid to rest the unsubstantiated allegations leveled at it last year. It is a matter of regret and anger that those making the allegations chose to recklessly trade in rumour and innuendo, without any evidence and without attempting to substantiate them," ILC Deputy Chairman, Clem Riley said.

Mr Rogers did identify a number of concerns regarding how the purchase was managed on behalf of the Board and has recommended that the Board seek further legal advice in relation to individuals named in his Report before handing it to the Board.

The ILC Board accepted Mr Rogers' advice to delay handing over his final report in order for him to seek such advice on behalf of the Board.

"Mr Rogers felt it was important to 'clear the air' as soon as possible in relation to the allegations of criminal conduct. He is now seeking legal advice regarding the actions of some people directly involved in the sale process."

The ILC Board in June last year commissioned the independent inquiry after a number of claims were made about the acquisition and the actions of Board members and ILC staff.

During his briefing, Mr Rogers also clarified the issue of the price paid for Roebuck Plains, stating that the previous owners had, through a complex transaction involving a sale price and lease payments, actually spent \$6.3 million on the property – not the \$1.3 million figure often referred to.

.../2

"The Board awaits Mr Rogers' full report with great interest. However, it is important to note that the Board itself has already taken steps to address a range of administrative and management issues emerging from the Roebuck Plains acquisition three years ago.

"The current ILC Board was dissatisfied with the conduct of the purchase and as a result, ordered the strengthening of a number of internal procedures to ensure that ILC policy and Board instructions are adhered to at all times," Mr Riley said.

The Board is constantly considering ways in which the ILC can enhance its important role in acquiring and managing land for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"The Board last year commissioned an independent review of the structure and operational efficiency and effectiveness of the ILC," Mr Riley said.

It has also instituted a comprehensive audit of every property with which it has had involvement, including those that have been divested, to ascertain their current status and to evaluate their benefit to Indigenous people. Furthermore, a new National Indigenous Land Strategy has recently been endorsed to govern the ILC's future land acquisition and land management programs.

Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) – Background

The ILC was established in June 1995 as an independent Commonwealth statutory authority to meet the needs of dispossessed Indigenous Australians as part of the Federal Government's response to the High Court's historic Mabo native title ruling in 1992. The Government recognised that despite the passing of Native Title legislation the following year, the overwhelming majority of Indigenous people had been dispossessed and would be unable to regain ownership and control of their land through native title processes.

The ILC's charter is to utilise the Indigenous Land Fund – set up to help rebuild an indigenous land base for future generations – to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to acquire and manage land. National and regional indigenous land strategies were developed following extensive consultation with indigenous people and organisations and these guide the ILC's efforts.

Since its establishment in 1995, the ILC has purchased more than 130 properties across Australia on behalf of indigenous peoples, and title to 78 of those properties has been transferred to indigenous groups. The ILC also has committed significant funding towards land management and enterprise development activities and training strategies to ensure properties are utilised in a sound and sustainable way for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. The ILC's seven-member Board is appointed by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and is accountable to the Commonwealth Parliament.

Media Inquiries: James Tonkin, Gavin Anderson & Company: 0413 432 775