

Submission No. 89
Date Received 31-5-05



31 MAY 2005

ATSA

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31st May, 2005

The Secretary,
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Attn: Inquiry Secretary, Ms Cheryl Scarlett

Dear Madam,

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

As you may know, in 1999 the State of South Australia initiated a Statewide approach to settling Native Title. Initially, this involved the State, and three peak bodies – the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM), representing all Native Title claimants across the State, the South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy (SACOME) representing the resources industry and the South Australian Farmers Federation (SAFF) representing all farming and pastoral interests across the State. In 2003, the group was joined by the Local Government Association (LGA) and fishing interests.

It is the aim of the negotiating team to settle Native Title across the State, focussing on the various sectoral interests. SACOME has already concluded two area Minerals Exploration Indigenous Landuse Agreements (ILUA's) in the State, is near completion of a third and has recently entered into a fourth.

What distinguishes these ILUA's from any others around Australia is:

- Each of the participating peak bodies is a signatory
- Each participating claim group is a signatory
- There are benefits arising from the negotiations payable to each of the communities
- The benefits are payable by both the State and by the participating peak body
- There is OH&S coverage, provided by the State, for Traditional Owners undertaking Aboriginal Heritage clearances
- Each agreement includes provision for employment and training where possible
- They are demonstrably more effective than litigation, particularly in building future relationships.

Our Strategic Plan, expects to have covered the entire State by 2009 (subject to the availability of funding). While there is provision in each of the Minerals Exploration ILUAs for education, training and employment, it is recognised that this must, by definition, be limited because of the fact that most exploration is very mobile and because, at this stage it requires highly specialised operatives, generally in the field of the geosciences.

However, in response to the expressed needs of the Aboriginal people with whom we have been negotiating about the education, training and employment prospects for their youth at production (and it is explained that it takes about 1000 exploration experiences to find a productive mine), SACOME has decided that it must take a proactive approach to these issues if it is not to jeopardise the review of the ILUAs, the first of which is due in 2008.

To this end, and with a specific focus on Aboriginal education leading to productive employment, SACOME has undertaken the following:

- On the basis of research, has identified a world's best practice technical skills education program for Aboriginal people with Rio Tinto's Pilbara Iron operation. This program is based on what can best be described as the old 'Master of Apprentices program', and was designed and tailored for Rio Tinto by Janina Gawler, the former CEO of ANTA. The program is accredited with TAFE in WA and has been so successful that a similar one has now been established with BHP (Iron Ore) in the West. Other similar programs have been established by Rio Tinto in other sites it operates. In South Australia, Oxiana expects to commence production of its Prominent Hill site using a similar model. They will undertake extensive preliminary training and education to prepare students for start-up in 2008, with which they will need assistance and resourcing.
- On the basis of research, has identified a demonstrably best practice after-school program designed to foster secondary education to year 12 in the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation; and is supporting the establishment of such a program in Port Augusta with start-up anticipated for 2006. This will be the 9th of a chain of such programs, all of which are linked into a range of industries. The program recognises the learning differences of Aboriginal children and of the need to bring them to high level competence in numeracy, literacy and study skills. Industry and State education facilities are immersed into the program with commitments for employment as part of the agreement arising from industry involvement.
- In recognition of the chronic skills deficit for the resources industry, the cost of 'fly-in-fly-out' and to ensure that the ILUAs endure beyond their initial 5 year duration, SACOME has escorted senior State Government Ministers, senior members of the resources industry and senior members of our Aboriginal community, to view some of the above. There was unanimity that wherever practicable, these practices should be emulated and supported.
- The Chamber has submitted an interest in the development of an Australian Technical College as a satellite to the proposal of the Whyalla Economic Development Board, to be located in either/both Coober Pedy and/or Roxby Downs.
- SACOME is also lobbying with government and the universities on a broader front than just Aboriginal students, to re-instate professional courses in the geosciences. Industry already funds significant research facilities into oil, gas and geothermal studies. The Chamber is also lobbying the State Government to lift the profile of science courses within the secondary

education system to ensure flow-through and readiness for tertiary education in the resources sector.

- SACOME and other members of the resources industry also sponsor a PhD student whose research is focussed on what makes for a successful Aboriginal enterprise. This research informs our strategic planning.
- Several SACOME members actively support and mentor Aboriginal enterprises.

To sum up, SACOME supports a responsible and pro-active approach to the employment of Aboriginal people on the part of all resources industry explorers and miners in the State. This approach is highly collaborative with the A LRM and the Department of Primary Industries and Resources.

In addition, the Statewide Indigenous Negotiating Team has recently resolved to coordinate its approach to advance the education, training and employment prospects of Aboriginal children. It is currently seeking funding to enable it to host a forum of key stakeholders. The focus of the forum will be to identify all stakeholders (governments and industries) in the delivery of Aboriginal education and training and to bring those together with a view to a more effective and time efficient outcome.

Based on feedback from the various industry bodies, it is considered more likely that industry will participate and grow opportunities if they 'drive' the process with the high level participation from specialists in State and Federal governments responding to the considered approach of relevant Indigenous communities. It is generally considered that the need for action, based on good modelling, is paramount.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Stephanie Walker on 08 8373 9603

Yours sincerely,



Phillip Sutherland
Chief Executive