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21 August 2006

Mr Jonathan Curtis  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: [legcon.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:legcon.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Mr Curtis

**Re: Inquiry into Stolen Wages**

We note that the deadline for submissions to the above Inquiry has been extended to 29 September. ALSWA welcomes this extension and are glad of the opportunity to submit more information to the Inquiry.

ALSWA protests, though, against the Committee's decision to hold public hearings in Brisbane and Sydney only. We stated in our submission that the issues of stolen wages and misappropriated payments is one of central importance to all Aboriginal people across Western Australia. We estimated that the numbers affected by government controls over paid labour would have included most Aboriginal adults, teenagers and children in employment from the late nineteenth century through to the early 1960s. But it seems that the interests of these thousands of Aboriginal people in the nation's largest State have been ignored in the Committee's plans for public hearings. We urge the Committee to reconsider the existing timetable, and to extend public hearings to at least Perth and a number of regional centres in Western Australia. Aboriginal people in the East and West Kimberley, Goldfields, Murchison/Gascoyne, Pilbara, Southwest, Central Desert and Southern regions

should be given the opportunity to present their information to the Inquiry. Without this information that is relevant to the terms of reference for the inquiry, the Senate Committee members will be impaired in their ability to make accurate recommendations. ALSWA also questions whether an Inquiry which conducts only two public hearings on the eastern seaboard is a genuinely national Inquiry.

ALSWA stated in its submission that the contribution made by Aboriginal workers to our nation's economic wealth is an important historical issue. The Inquiry into Stolen Wages should be a forum in which this history is told and disseminated, and the extent of the withholding of wages and misappropriation of payments quantified. The quantification of Aboriginal wages, entitlements and trust funds from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s, and investigation into their management and protection from misappropriation are central to the terms of reference for the Inquiry into Stolen Wages. ALSWA urges the Committee to adequately address these issues, and to include Aboriginal Western Australians in the public hearings for the Inquiry.

We urge that the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee schedule a number of hearings in Western Australia, in the Perth metropolitan and regional centres. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dennis Eggington', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dennis Eggington  
Chief Executive Officer

CC: Hon Alan Carpenter, Premier of Western Australia  
Executive Committee, Kimberley Land Council