

AURUKUN SHIRE COUNCIL

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RESOLUTION:
OUR REF.: NP.LS/
YOUR REF:
ENQUIRIES: NEVILLE POOTCHEMUNKA
DATE: 14 April 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
PO Box 6100
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600



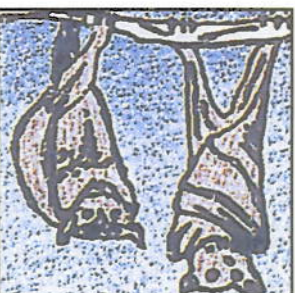
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I refer to the call by the Senate for submissions into the *Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010*. The Aurukun Shire Council is hereby making a submission to this Inquiry.

Aurukun Shire Council is a Queensland Local Government authority administered under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 and Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act 1978.

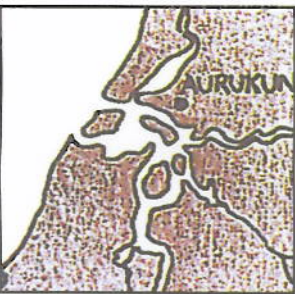
In addition to the normal services traditionally provided by Local government, Council is involved in a wide range of social and community areas which present special challenges to both the elected Council and staff. These include:

- The development of decision making processes which are more appropriate to an Aboriginal community;
- Development and maintenance of Outstation/Homeland Centres supporting the return of the Wik peoples to their homelands;
- Training of local Aboriginal people for future roles in managing and administering the Shire;
- Social and community issues, including education, health, police and welfare service;
- Establishment (by Local Law) of a Land and Sea Management Office;
- Establishment of an Artists and Craft Workers Collective to focus on establishment of a viable art and craft industry in Aurukun.



The Aurukun community has previously seen the need for Commonwealth intervention to protect the rights of its people. In 1978, the Queensland Government decided to take over control of both Aurukun and Mornington Island reserves. Both communities were against this and protested seeking the help of

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the Commonwealth Government. After lengthy negotiations, legislation for self-management of the two reserves was introduced into Federal Parliament and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Queensland Reserves and Communities Self-Management) Act was passed on 7 April 1978. On the same day, the Queensland Government revoked the two reserves which meant that neither the Queensland Act nor the new Commonwealth legislation applied to the area any longer. Further negotiations took place between State and Federal Ministers and after lengthy discussions, an agreement was reached wherein local authorities would be created for the former reserves and that the land should be leased to the newly created councils for a period of fifty (50) years. The Aurukun Shire Council is the trustee for the land within the Aurukun Shire Lease.

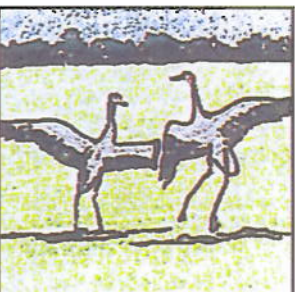


The Aurukun Shire Council notes that the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010 is a:

"Bill for an Act to protect the interests of Aboriginal traditional owners in the management, development and use of native title land situated in wild river areas, and for related purposes"

We also note that clause 4(3) of the Bill states:

"In particular, it is the intention of the Parliament that this Act protect the rights of traditional owners of native title land within wild river areas to own, use, develop and control that land"



And clause 5 states:

"The development or use of native title land in a wild river area cannot be regulated under the relevant Queensland legislation unless the Aboriginal traditional owners of the land agree"

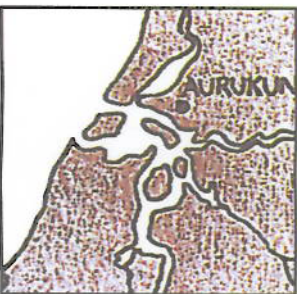


The Aurukun Shire Council supports the intent of the Bill to prevent the regulation of the interests of Aboriginal traditional owners in the management, development and use of native title land situated in wild river areas without their agreement. The Aurukun Shire Council believes that the recent experiences of the Shire Council and traditional owners with the declaration of the Archer River Wild River Area without proper consultation with the Council and traditional owners and without the consent of traditional owners justifies this Bill. In particular the Council is extremely concerned that large areas of land south of the Archer River were declared as High Preservation Area without prior notification to the Council and traditional owners and without affording the Council and traditional owners due process to make submissions about the proposal.

The Aurukun Shire Council is also aware that the proposed Bill is consistent with Article 19 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. This UN Declaration is supported by the Commonwealth Government and States:

"States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them".





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Page 3



The people of Aurukun have fought for many years for the recognition and protection of their rights. From their first encounters with the Dutch in 1605, Donald Peinkinna defending his rights to the Privy Council and John Koowarta taking matters to the High Court, the people of Aurukun have a proud history of defending their rights. We support the action of the Commonwealth to prevent the arbitrary and unjust removal of the rights of the traditional owners of Cape York.

Yours sincerely



Neville ~~Pootchemunka~~
Mayor

