



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

28<sup>th</sup> August, 2002

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: **Inquiry Into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities**

I am pleased to receive an opportunity to provide comments to the above inquiry which I consider to be one of the most important especially to the Victorian Aboriginal community.

I would like to organise a more detailed verbal submission to the inquiry when it is in Melbourne and would appreciate receiving early advice about the visit so that I can make arrangements for my Board of Management to attend.

The main comments that I wanted to make to the inquiry was that firstly the ownership of land in Victoria by traditional Aboriginal groups is limited to only 2 groups who own small pieces of land in the Western district and in the Gippsland area. It is becoming increasingly apparent that Native Title is not going to deliver any further land to Victorian Aboriginal groups so there is not likely to be any change to this number in the near future.

Whilst there may be a large number of Aboriginal organisations or groups in Victoria most are small with little or no real funding. The peak Indigenous organisations, of which there are some 5, continually battle to secure funding each and every year.

ATSIC funding to Victoria has always been limited and the cuts that were made some 5 years ago severely affected Aboriginal organisations and in turn communities who have yet to recover. There has been no increase in funding which means that services are forced to provide less each year. Any new funding (and possibly even existing funding) for Indigenous community is increasingly earmarked for "remote" areas. Victorian Aboriginal communities are slowly and deliberately being starved of Commonwealth funding.

Aboriginal communities throughout Victoria have become increasingly isolated from one another as resources dwindle and some community organisations gradually cease to exist.

The solution to these issues can certainly be found in "capacity building" however, this is not a total solution if "capacity building" means that Victorian Aboriginal communities are expected to make do with what we have rather than be provided with what we need.

Local Aboriginal organisations in Victoria must receive proper and expert assistance that will guide and support them as they grow and develop. Expert assistance should be targeted to the senior staff of the organisation and to the Board of Management who must be able to build on their existing skills and knowledge in ways that are culturally appropriate and meaningful.

Peak Aboriginal organisations in Victoria have already recognised the need to develop our own network which will provide an opportunity to share information and expertise, learn off one another and provide mutual support and respect to one another.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that too often with inquiry's of this type information is collected and analysed and decisions are made without any further feedback or consultation to communities and individuals. It is hoped that this does not occur with this inquiry.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Murray', with a checkmark at the end.

Ms. Bev Murray,  
Chief Executive Officer