

2 February, 1999

Mr J Catchpole
Inquiry Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Catchpole

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE REEVES REPORT
ON THE ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS (NT) ACT**

Following its meeting today, Council has requested that I write to the Committee outlining its objections to several recommendations made in the report.

While Council agrees with the establishment of smaller Regional Councils (Chapter 10) it does not agree that the delegates from those Regional Councils to the proposed NT Aboriginal Council should be “approved” by any government (Chapter 28) as this could restrict the independent operations of that peak Council. Nor does Council agree that funds provided by the Aboriginal Benefits Reserve be allocated to the NT Aboriginal Council (Chapter 16) as this money should go direct to the Regional Councils for community development projects.

Finally, Council does not agree with the proposed changes to Entry Permit system to Aboriginal owned land (Chapter 14) as it is important that non Tiwis be invited to the islands on the basis of what they can contribute to Tiwi development. Removal of that power would allow unrestricted travel of non Tiwis into Nguiu with all the social problems (alcohol and drugs) that this could cause. This is even more important when it is realised that the nearest Police presence is at Garden Point on Melville Island. It takes approximately one and a half hours for Police to travel to Nguiu from Pirlangimpi, Melville Island (often longer if the Council ferry over Apsley Strait is not operating).

As an aside, Council believes that the Reeves Report is in error when it states that the Permit system is a “relic from the old welfare days” when Aboriginals needed permission to move off their reserves. Tiwis have always been able to travel into Darwin and other parts of the Territory without permission to do so.

Council understands that the Committee will be visiting Nguiu on 3 March and they look forward to raising these issues with members.

Yours sincerely

Alan Harris
Council Clerk