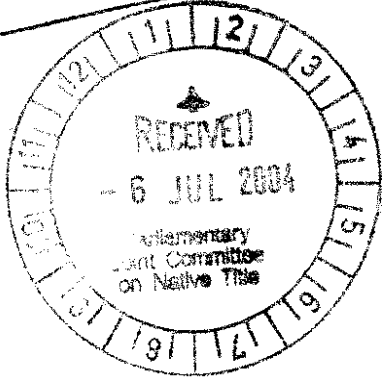


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TO: **Senate Select Committee on the
Administration of Indigenous Affairs**

FAX: (02) 6277 5866

DATE: 6 July, 2004

RE: **SUBMISSION PAPER**

PAGES: 4

To Whom It May Concern.

Following is my submission to the Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs. Please accept and consider my submission in the spirit it is offered.

Sincerely,



Philip McLaren.

Indigenous Representation and the delivery of Indigenous Programs.

Le fil indigène invisible.

This submission is about transparency of government dealings in Indigenous matters and of maintaining an existing Indigenous democratic right in determining the future of the first Australians.

At the moment Indigenous programs and their delivery are in the hands of a centralised and accountable democratically elected Indigenous organisation, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), which could not be more open or transparent.

In part, the body of this paper raises objections to the proposed decentralising, fragmenting and placement of Indigenous program delivery, budgets and outcomes in numerous and generalised portfolios; as well as the erosion of an existing democratic process and right of determination. A policy as proposed by government will make it difficult for anyone to see the pattern in the fabric of Indigenous affairs; it's an into-the-haystack solution. Information on Indigenous policies and programs will be camouflaged; the threads of which will become invisible.

Some Perspective.

Historically, we have inherited the deliberate demoralisation of a people.

Terra Nullius: since James Cook, the Indigenous population of Australia has been nigh invisible. Cook, having declared this an empty land, forever established an illegal paradigm that still victimises the first Australians.

Eradication: soon after settlement murders and massacres were another way adopted to make the first Australians invisible. Massacres at Camden and Campbelltown just south of Sydney set the standard; then followed near genocide in Van Dieman's land; the 1824 Wiradjuri massacre; 30 years of massacres along the Darling River (1835 to 1865); 1838 Major Nunn's campaign of massacres; the 1838 Myall Creek massacre of the Kamilaroi people; the 11 years of Angus McMillan's vigilante massacres throughout Gippsland (1840 to 1851); there were massacres at Kilcoy and Yeeman; 'reprisals' at Cullin-La-Ringo, Pidgeon Creek and Forrest River followed by the horrific Coniston massacre ... and numerous other violent solutions to make these people 'go away'. There followed three generations of sinister government social engineering and deliberate cultural genocide in what is commonly called the *Stolen Generations*.

White Australia policy: the governments of R.G. Menzies and A. Caldwell both worked hard in post World War II Australia to ensure the (now) majority of this country was of a white skin colour and the culture of this country was Anglophile. This was done with a royalist arrogance and no thought at all for the original black Australians.

Dependency: the Australian government assisted any religious order in herding the first Australians onto hastily established 'missions' – it became a priority. All language and 'heathen' traditional cultural expressions were beaten out of children; hunting and gathering knowledge and skills were discouraged and a dependency for their very livelihood was established. The transfer of this social responsibility is today at the feet of government who behave in a paternal way, waving a massive economic stick.

Who can honestly say that returning to the failed paternal-missionary mentality will work this time?

Indigenous Inclusionism.

Indigenous representation: any thoughtful shift away from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, a democratically elected Indigenous body, should include the retention of the basic premise of representational democracy for the first Australians. Of course this could easily be achieved in a variety of ways, I put forward only a few here.

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Indigenous Public Reporting Authority (IPRA): this organisation would consist of democratically elected Indigenous Australians who would be given a mandate to make visible government policies, programs and delivery outcomes affecting Indigenous Australians. IPRA would have access to any Ministerial Portfolio and draw on expertise from any government department i.e.: Auditor General.

Policy: Indigenous creative conceptual thinkers and visualisers would be employed by IPRA for its *Think Tank*. Constant reviews of Euro-cultural values such as Economic Rationalism and Ownership, Security, Law and Order, Housing, Health, Education and Employment would be undertaken. A comprehensive *Three Generation Policy* would be established by this group – a 75 Year Plan – amended from time to time after its implementation.

A national voice: we should create a situation in which three Indigenous Senators are elected every six years as voted by Indigenous Australians. And /or there could be Indigenous elections for Ministerial Departmental Liaison Officers; representative advisors to the Minister, physically located in each Minister's offices.

In summary: from the resulting occupation of this country by our British forebears we have inherited a contemporary social, legal, moral and ethical responsibility. We are well past the point of an apology for what our ancestors inflicted on the original people of Australia. We can't simply abrogate our responsibility by saying; we didn't do it so why should we fix it? Our nation has become extremely wealthy in the exploitation of this land. It was not an empty land – Terra Nullius was a lie. As a nation we are well placed to address the oppression and demoralisation Indigenous Australians are experiencing today. The carved-up and into-the-haystack approach for Indigenous affairs as proposed only benefits governments embarking on a course of concealment.

I propose we wholeheartedly begin to reconcile Indigenous matters now, and do so in a morally, ethically and transparent manner