

FAX TRANSMISSION

To:

THE SECRETARYSENATE SELECT COMMITTEE on the ADMINISTRATION
OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Fax No.:

02-6277 5866Rachel and Alan HARDIE
364 Thompsons Road
Lower Templestowe 3107
Victoria, Australia

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SUBMISSION
TO
INQUIRY

The Secretary
Senate Select Committee on the
Administration of Indigenous Affairs,
Parliament House,
Canberra 2600.

Dear Sir / Madam,

The following is our submission to the Committee's Inquiry on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004 and proposed related changes to the administration of Commonwealth Indigenous affairs policy.

- We believe that Australia has an obligation to respect and protect the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination, human rights, and First Peoples' status and the inherent rights that follow from that status.
- We believe that the indigenous people should determine who represents them locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- It seems to us that the current bill and proposed administrative provisions will deny this fundamental right. To reduce Indigenous involvement^{to} that of an advisory role by a body appointed by the Government will remove any real prospect of self-determination for their future.
- We believe that the changes also contradicted the Government's own review of ATSIC

elected Indigenous representation and greater control at a regional level.

• We believe that there is a need for a National Indigenous Representative Body which reflects their values and aspirations, and which is open and accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

• We believe that such a body should be the primary and principal source of advice to the Government and be responsible for the provision of specific services to Indigenous people.

• We believe that a return to 'mainstream' service delivery will be 'a step back in time' to the failed paternalism of previous history. However, if mainstream delivery service does become the policy, it must be on the basis of responses to Indigenous community and cultural requirements. Furthermore, Government departments and agencies must be accountable for the provision of services to Indigenous people, and such accountability should be rigorously monitored by them.

• In conclusion, we believe that any replacement for ATSIC must be determined in consultation and negotiation with Indigenous stakeholders, on the basis of their informed consent. This principle should be endorsed by the committee in their report.

Yours sincerely,
Alan Hardie

for

Rachel and Alan HARDIE
364 Thompsons Road
Lower Templestowe 3107
Victoria, Australia