

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

20 July 2004

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make the following brief submission to the Committee's inquiry on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004 and proposed changes to the administration of Commonwealth Indigenous affairs policy.

I am deeply concerned that in abolishing ATSIC, the government is reverting to an old paternalistic policy of deciding policy FOR aboriginal people. This has to be a backward step - surely outcomes have been shown to be more satisfactory when communities have had the power to make their own decisions. Aboriginal and TSI people need to be able to determine their own affairs and it is essential that a new body, NOT just one with a vague 'advisory' role, be set up to represent them, on a local, regional and national level.

It is not a good decision for aboriginal people, particularly those in isolated and rural areas, to be relegated to "mainstream services". The appalling statistics regarding infant mortality, maternal mortality and average life expectancy surely dictate that special services decided by local communities in conjunction with government are urgently needed.

Yours sincerely

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