



Premier of Victoria



1 Treasury Place
GPO Box 4912VV
Melbourne Victoria 3002
DX210753
Telephone: (03) 9651 5000
Facsimile: (03) 9651 5054
Email: premier@dpc.vic.gov.au
Internet: www.premier.vic.gov.au

14 SEP 2004

Senator Trish Crossin
Chair
Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Crossin

INQUIRY INTO THE ADMINISTRATION OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Thank you for your letter of 14 July in which you invite the Victorian Government to provide a submission to the Inquiry.

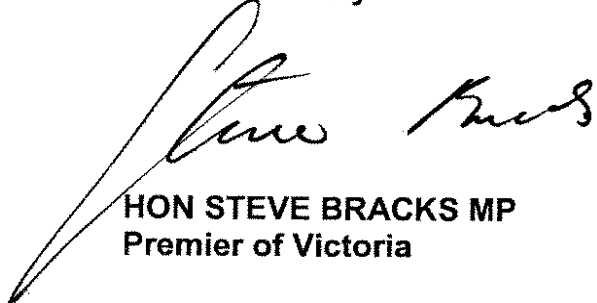
I understand that Victoria has negotiated an extension of the deadline for submission to the Inquiry by Friday 13 August 2004.

Please find attached the Victorian Government's contribution to the Senate Inquiry.

As you will see the Victorian Government is very committed to enhancing outcomes for Indigenous Victorians, and is keen to see appropriate representative arrangements put in place in Victoria and other jurisdictions to enable Indigenous Australians to 'have a represented voice'.

Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to contribute to this very important issue.

Yours sincerely



HON STEVE BRACKS MP
Premier of Victoria

Submission

**By
Victorian Government**

**To
Australian Senate Select Committee on the Administration of
Indigenous Affairs**

1. Terms of Reference for Inquiry

A Select committee, to be known as the Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs, is appointed to inquire into and report, by 31 October 2004, on the following matters:

- (a) the provisions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004;
- (b) the proposed administration of Indigenous programs and services by mainstream departments and agencies; and
- (c) related matters.

2. Victoria recommends:

- Representative arrangements for Indigenous communities should be agreed to on a national (rather than State by State) approach. This agreement should include a structure that allows for elected representation that ensures self determination for Indigenous Australians and that their diverse concerns are justly represented, regardless of where they live.
- New arrangements for the administration of Indigenous services need to ensure that there is no decrease in the overall level of federal support for Indigenous Australians. No State or Indigenous community should be disadvantaged by a changing focus in Commonwealth support from metropolitan and regional communities to communities in rural and remote Australia.
- Any arrangements for new service delivery and planning need to incorporate a proper and respectful process of engagement with Indigenous communities, including those involved with COAG Trial sites. New arrangements should also include mechanisms on an appropriate scale that enable Indigenous community 'buy-in', and a 'place-based' approach by the Commonwealth, the State and where relevant Local Government.

Existing jurisdictional consultation and regional planning and development structures, which are operating effectively and are supported by Indigenous communities should be maintained and enhanced.

- The whole of Government should reiterate its commitment to a genuine partnership with Indigenous communities through support for the inclusion of a 'partnership' between Government and the Indigenous community, as an overarching introduction in the 'Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians' that reflects the principles of 'self-determination' and 'elected representation'.

- The overarching introduction should articulate a partnership approach between Government and the Indigenous community that involves:
 - the Indigenous community choosing its own representatives at national, regional and local levels;
 - Government support to develop the leadership, skills, capacity and means for the Indigenous community to act on its own behalf;
 - real engagement and respect by all governments when dealing with Indigenous people;
 - joint determination of the objectives, priorities and methods of making long term and sustainable improvements in Indigenous well-being.
- In addition, the Principles need to more clearly articulate the Australian Government's commitment to maintenance of effort (in both Indigenous specific and mainstream agencies), funding according to need and the benefit of Indigenous management and delivery of services.
- While the current arrangements for COAG Trials should be maintained it is premature to build on the COAG Trials given they are still in their developmental phase and are based on disparate models of operation across diverse jurisdictions.

Although the COAG trials are progressing well, it is too early to determine whether the trials should form the basis of a new model of service delivery in Victoria or wider Australia.