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Sent: Monday, 26 July 2004 4:02 PM
To: Committee, Indigenous Affairs (SEN)
Subject: Submission re Administration of Indigenous Affairs

From: Janice Howard
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To whom it may concern ...

It is quite clear that the Government's response to the review of ATSIC is unjust and discriminatory in that:

- there would be no elected Indigenous body to replace ATSIC, just a hand-picked advisory body;
- this is a retrograde step which deprives the Aboriginal people of the small degree of self-determination which they have achieved;
- this goes against the the recommendations of the Government's own review which recommended a re-structuring, not abolition of ATSIC.

Over the last thirty years Indigenous people have made remarkable progress in developing leadership skills, with many taking advantage of the higher educational facilities that are available to all Australians - this against all the odds of isolation and deprivation of their own culture. With their unique gifts in the arts, (drama, dance, song and painting), they have contributed magnificently to the acknowledgement of Australian culture both at home and abroad. This has not been without economic value to our country. It is time for paternalism to end and for the Indigenous people to be supported in achieving true self-determination in their own country. This requires:

- that means be afforded them to come to informed decisions as to who should represent them locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Processes must acknowledge their diversity and traditional authority structures;
- that they be able to put forward their views on policy, program and funding in any and all areas that impact on their lives;

- the new body should be open, transparent in its dealings and accountable to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Janice M. Howard.