

CONVERSATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

18/84 St Georges Crescent
Drummoyne NSW 2047

Thursday, April 7, 2003

Peter Hallahan
Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Room S1.61, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Mr Hallahan,

I have heard recently of the Federal Government's mind to abolish the position of an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. I appeal to you to vote against this Bill.

Lumping Aboriginal affairs in with a raft of other Commissions would detract from the importance of not only Aboriginal affairs but also the others included in the group. These are all specialist areas and will not benefit from a one size fits all Commission.

For a start Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs to be headed by an indigenous person who has the specialist knowledge to understand the difficulties or their particular problems with discrimination and being marginalised. An indigenous person also has the cultural depth to be able to communicate with those communities with a sensitivity that seems to have escaped us 'Gubbas.'

Racism and an overall disrespect of the traditional owners of this country is likely to be exacerbated if their particular body is diluted in the porridge of a combined Commission. Their needs really are quite specific.

As a taxpayer I wish to add that economics is NOT the only reason to make decisions. Please do not let economic efficiency get in the way of sound and compassionate and effective government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Noel Winteburn', written over the typed name.

Noel Winteburn
Convener: Conversations for the 21st Century.