

# ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS

1.1 The Australian Greens support the findings of the committee's report, but make the following additional comments and recommendations.

1.2 A number of groups representing the interests and concerns of the Indigenous community clearly stated that they believe a Royal Commission is needed to ensure that the issues of concern are able to be fully and openly addressed (including the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, the National Tertiary Education Union, and Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation).<sup>1</sup> It is acknowledged that under ideal circumstances the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments would respond to this report and act to address this issue and implement the recommendations of this report, which would negate the need for a Royal Commission. However, given the concerns raised in evidence to the inquiry about the inadequacy of existing State government inquiries, and given that other State governments have been reluctant to consider these issues and even declined to provide evidence to the committee inquiry, the Australian Greens believe there are legitimate grounds to be concerned that some governments may not respond in an adequate and timely fashion.

1.3 Under these circumstances this could lead to a situation where there is no timely and effective means of ensuring justice is done outside of costly and drawn-out litigation by surviving claimants - despite the committee having found there is good reason to believe an injustice has been done and recommended action be taken to ensure recompense. The Australian Greens are also concerned that under current circumstances the state and territory Aboriginal Legal Services do not have adequate resources to help litigants pursue compensation in a timely fashion were this to become necessary.

1.4 To guard against this eventuality the Australian Greens put forward the following recommendations:

## **Additional Recommendation 1**

**1.5 The Australian Greens recommend that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner assess the adequacy of Commonwealth and state government responses to the recommendations of this report; and advise the Commonwealth of whether adequate progress has been made after 12 months from the date of this report.**

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1 *Submissions* 30 and 60; Mr Gary Highland, National Director, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, *Committee Hansard*, 27 October 2006, p. 48.

**Additional Recommendation 2**

**1.6 The Australian Greens recommend that, if Commonwealth and state governments have not responded adequately to the recommendations of this report within 12 months, a Royal Commission into Stolen Wages be established.**

**Senator Rachel Siewert**

**Australian Greens**