

Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee  
Department of the Senate  
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## **Inquiry into Stolen Wages**

The announcement of an Inquiry into Stolen Wages is well overdue. This is a welcome Inquiry and hopefully will not be the last investigation in this area. A coordinated approach is required as this is an issue which is shared by many of the states and territories.

### **Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference are thorough, however, they also raise further questions. While calling for public submissions, upon examination many of the terms of reference can only be answered by State and Territory Governments and the Commonwealth Government.

Terms of Reference (h), suggests that we may need to look internationally to other countries with similar histories of past injustices to identify solutions. Other jurisdictions may give some ideas on how to deal with the complex issue of stolen wages but should not offer the only solution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians may offer solutions.

Terms of Reference (i), which discuss the role of a national forum, should be a recommendation from the Inquiry. The national forum would be a starting point to 'set the record straight'. The establishment of a national body from this Inquiry and the national forum, would seek to address many of the issues raised in the Terms of Reference.

### **Other Comments**

The Committee should ensure that the Inquiry pay attention to Torres Strait Islanders in the Torres Strait and on mainland Australia in relation to stolen wages. Current evidence (anecdotal and otherwise), may only focus on Aboriginal people on mainland Australia.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have their own personal stories to share. It is the Committees duty to actively seek these out through culturally appropriate avenues and in a timely manner.

I look forward to the Committee's findings. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Samantha Faulkner  
28 July 2006