

COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION

INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY

FINAL SUBMISSION

From: ATSIC - Tasmania

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COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION
BRIEF SPEAKIN NOTES ON DISCUSSION PAPER
INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY 2000/2

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I TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE COMMISSION FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE DRAFT REPORT AND AM HOPEFUL MY COMMENTS ON BEHALF OF MY ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY IN TASMANIA WILL BE ACCEPTED IN A POSITIVE LIGHT.

THE ISSUE OF ABORIGINAL FUNDING IN TASMANIA IS VITAL BEARING IN MIND THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION OF THE STATE (ACCORDING TO AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS, 1996 CENSUS) IS SECOND ONLY TO THAT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

TASMANIA HAS ON THOSE FIGURES AN INDIGENOUS POPULATION OF 3 POINT 2 PER CENT. THAT IS EQUAL TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA BUT FAR ABOVE THE MOST POPULATED STATES SUCH AS VICTORIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES THAT HAVE INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS OF LESS THAN TWO PER CENT.

IN THE PAST DECADE THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IDENTIFYING AS ABORIGINAL. THE 1991 ABS FIGURES SHOW 9,500 PEOPLE IDENTIFIED AS ABORIGINAL ...IN 1999 THAT FIGURE ROSE TO 16,500.

THE MEDIAN AGE OF ABORIGINES IN TASMANIA IS 18.

SOME SENIOR BUREACRATS BELIEVE THIS FIGURE IS FALSE AND THE ABORIGINALITY OF A NUMBER OF PEOPLE IS CONTINUALLY BEING QUESTIONED DESPITE STRICT GUIDELINES TO ASSESS A PERSONS ABORIGINALITY.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN TASMANIA FACE THE SAME BARRIERS AS THOSE IN MAINLAND. FOR EXAMPLE HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT OR LACK OF IT, THE BATTLE FOR LAND RIGHTS, LOWER AVERAGE INCOMES AND LOWER SCHOOL RETENTION RATES.

ADEQUATE FUNDING IS ONE WAY, PROBABLY THE MAJOR WAY, IN WHICH THESE AREAS CAN BE ADDRESSED.

BECAUSE THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY IS STILL SUCH A LONG WAY BEHIND THE GENERAL COMMUNITY IN MANY OF THE AREAS I MENTIONED IT IS VITAL INDIVIDUAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES BE OVER-

COMPENSATED TO ENABLE THEM TO COME UP TO PAR WITH THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY.

IT IS ALSO VITAL INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES BE INVOLVED IN THE FUNDING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES WHICH WILL FURTHER THEIR ADVANCEMENT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION AND EVENTUAL ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE WHICH IS SPELLED OUT IN THE ATSI ACT.

IN FACT SELF-DETERMINATION IS ONE OF THE MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF ATSI.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES AND VARIOUS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT MUST ALSO BE ENCOURAGED AND NUTURED.

IF PROGRAMS ARE TO BE SUCCESSFUL, GOVERNMENTS OF ALL LEVELS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WHICH ARE PROVIDING SERVICES MUST BE PREPARED TO BE FLEXIBLE TO INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITY NEEDS.

WHERE INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES HAVE PLANS IN PLACE THEN THEY MUST ALSO BE GIVEN THE AUTHORITY AND NECESSARY FUNDING TO ALLOW THESE PLANS TO CONTINUE AND SUCCEED.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE MUST PLAY A PART IN ALL CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES DEALING WITH AREAS THAT AFFECT THEM. THESE AREAS MAY RANGE FROM LAND AND SEA RIGHTS TO EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AREAS.

THE DAYS OF STRINGENT CONTROLS BY BUREAUCRATS SITTING IN PLUSH OFFICES DECIDING WHAT IS BEST FOR AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY SEVERAL HUNDRED KILOMETRES AWAY MUST CEASE.

AUDITING AND FISCAL CONTROL ARE WELCOME AS IN NORMAL BUSINESS PRACTICE BUT THE COMMUNITY MUST BE GIVEN RIGHTS TO ACHIEVE SELF-DETERMINATION.