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Cc:
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Hands on
Parliament.doc (38 KB)

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LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW
COMMITTEE

Please find attached a submission in relation to the Parliamentary
Committee of Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Participation
in Queensland's Democratic Process

<<Hands on Parliament.doc>>

> Tom Gordon

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Hands on Parliament

Community Response

...true democracy comes at a price for a society...the provision of equitable & evolutionary processes and adequate State resources & infrastructure must continuously be expended for it to occur throughout the life of that society...

Barriers to Participation

Barriers to active participation comes in many quantifiable & qualitative forms – ranging from the personal & perceptual to the actual & legalistic. Many barriers to active participation within Queensland's democratic processes are community wide (affecting all cultures/races) but many are also culturally specific (both from within and/or externally applied). The following points are a brief summary of issues that need to be considered to understand the 'current' so that all can participate in the 'future'

General Issues

Disillusionment with the current parliamentary process in Queensland (and the flow-on effect of disillusionment with the Federal Parliament process).

Disillusionment with the adequacy of the current Party political process.

Disillusionment with the quality, attributes, and actions of members of Parliament.

The personal financial cost of getting elected to Parliament

The personal cost of public status to the individual and their families.

The size of electorates and the time to adequately represent such.

Lack of knowledge/insight of the importance of freedom/Parliament

Lack of an adequate skills/education together with leadership experience

Lack of hands-on experience in community activities to understand the 'workings' and pressures within wider society

Cultural Issues

Disillusionment with internal political 'infighting' by leaders within the indigenous community

The powerful cultural influence of family/group pressures on the individual to put the needs of the family/group ahead of the needs of the wider community

The enormous expectations placed upon a person to perform (both by their community and by the wider community)

A person's status within their cultural community

Cultural norms – the young 'turk' Vs the wise elder

The culture's democracy processes Vs Western/white democracy/processes

Being seen as a 'token' figure

Ways to enhance Participation

To participate means concurrent and real proactive changes must occur from the top down and from the bottom up. These changes must be real (not cosmetic) and produce permanent attitudinal changes (not lip service) both with mainstream society **and** within all cultural groups.

Reform the Parliamentary process to allow real debates and ensure active participation by all members of Parliament.

Reform the Party political process to allow real and active participation by all members of Parliament.

Members of Parliament must abide by a strict code of conduct and act in a professional/ethical manner at all times.

Long term fundamental/incremental educational campaigns to internalise within people the value of freedom and the value of being allowed to vote.

Provide adequate socio-economic resources to allow individuals to compete at a more equitable level in election campaigns.

Provide an appropriate educational and social environment for people (of all cultures and economic strata) to **want to** or **desire to** participate.

How to allow greater Participation

A career path must be urgently developed to allow indigenous persons to seek democratic decision making power. A mainstream pathway must lead from the schoolroom to the community forum, then to local Government, and then onto the highest Office of the State.

Local Government

An indigenous electoral roll is to be maintained.

At Each Local Council election 1 indigenous councillor position must be reserved for an indigenous person (an indigenous person can elect to be a 'general' candidate or the indigenous candidate – they would automatically be the 8th member of the Indigenous Review Group).

At each local Government election 7 indigenous community members are to be elected to an Indigenous Review Group.

A non- indigenous person can only vote for general candidates

An indigenous person can vote for both the general candidates, the indigenous candidate, and for members of the Indigenous Review Group (voting is compulsory).

The indigenous candidate is to be accorded equal participation/voting rights as any other councillor at Council meetings, committee participation, etc.

Members of the Indigenous Review Group are there to work with the indigenous/general councillors to review all matters affecting the wider community. Their views are to be seriously considered at Council meetings. Members of the Indigenous Review Group are to be paid meeting expenses and have access to a full time administrative staff person.

State Government

An indigenous electoral roll is to be maintained.

At each State Government election 8 indigenous members position are to be reserved for an indigenous person (an indigenous person can elect to be a 'general' candidate or the indigenous candidate). Thus there would be 89 + 8 = 97 members in Parliament.

The Queensland Electoral Commission is to determine the number of indigenous persons and their location within the State (and within each general member electorate). Thus to have approximate equal representation (one vote – one value) 8 larger indigenous electorates are to be imposed upon the existing electoral boundaries of the 89 general members (eg. in some cases 4 general electorates may make up 1 indigenous electorate, in other cases it may be 12 general electorates, etc)

So that an indigenous person can adequately and equally participate in an indigenous electorate election campaign they must be provided with a minimum level of public funding. The nomination fee would be \$100. The State would co-ordinate the timely distribution of three A4 mail-outs for each indigenous person during the campaign period. Indigenous person campaigning for an indigenous electorate must not be a member of a registered political Party nor receive funds directly/indirectly from a political Party.

An indigenous person can vote for both the general candidates and the indigenous candidate (voting is compulsory).

The indigenous candidate is to be accorded equal participation/voting rights (but excluded from the election of the Government, excluded from voting in on no-confidence motions, excluded from blocking Supply) as any other State member of Parliament (and vote on all matters affecting the wider community). Because of their larger electorate boundaries indigenous electorate members are to be given twice the budget/staff that is normally accorded to a member of a general electorate. An indigenous electorate member must be elected to each and every Committee of Parliament.

Indigenous Ombudsman

The State should urgently set up and adequately resource Indigenous Ombudsman Office to ensure that the lives and lifestyle of all indigenous people are adequately protected, enhanced and highlighted.

The Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee has the human rights to insure that indigenous people of this State do have a real voice and influence over all the lands and hands of the State. Such should be implement in full by 2007.

Tom Gordon

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