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5 PAGES INCLUDING COVER SHEET

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SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO

HANDS ON PARLIAMENT

**A Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Peoples' Participation In Queensland's Democratic
Process.**

Issues Paper- December 2002

From

Toni McPherson



BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

1. What are some of the reasons that Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in the Queensland Parliament?

Many Indigenous People that I know do not vote. Elected Representatives are unaware of the needs of their Indigenous constituency. They are usually culturally unaware, and therefore unable to deliver equitable representation.

The current Elected Representatives are non-indigenous, so it would seem indigenous people are not represented at all. How many political parties have cross cultural training, or have a recruitment drive targeted at increasing the number of indigenous members? Elected Representatives often have the view that it is political suicide to be pro-Aboriginal.

2. What are some of the reasons that Indigenous people might choose not to be involved in Queensland's Parliament and Government?

Many Indigenous people have no confidence in our current process.

- Resentment of the system is very common. Two hundred and fifty years of domination robs people of any faith in system.

3. What factors make it difficult for indigenous people to participate in Queensland's system of democracy?

4. Access to information especially in remote communities.

-Educational level

-General disadvantage makes participating in the system a very low priority.

-The process is not only alien but also culturally inappropriate.

4. Is more civics education and voter education targeted specifically to Indigenous people necessary?

Yes

Many indigenous people do not participate as they feel the current system does not represent them. Many are not on electoral roles due to their lifestyles and also choice.

5. What other strategies might promote greater participation by Indigenous people in the existing democratic process?

A promotion campaign to educate the wider public on the need for designated seats.

6. Would avenues for the body, which represents Indigenous people to have direct input into parliament, enhance the participation of Indigenous people in parliament?

No.

This body has been established by non-indigenous parliament and does not automatically represent all indigenous people. The general indigenous community did not establish this body and were never consulted on a wide scale as to the implementation of this body. There is much resentment in the community towards this body. It is white man's way of imposing ideals on the indigenous community.

7. Is it a good idea to enable bodies, which represent Indigenous people to have direct input into parliament? Why or why not?

No, as this is not a diverse enough group.

8. If a representative body with the direct input into parliament was to be established how should it operate?

- Who should be on the representative body
- What forms of direct input should the representative body have
- What else would be necessary to ensure parliament considered matters raised by the representative body

9. Would an Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Assembly contribute to the participation of Indigenous people in the democratic process in Queensland?

Yes

10. Is an Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Assembly a good idea? Why or why not?

Yes. Makes an opportunity for even more representation.

11. If an Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Assembly were to be established, how should it operate?

- How should members of an Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Assembly be selected
- What would be the specific role and functions of the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Assembly
- How should the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Assembly have input in the Queensland parliament
- What else would be necessary to ensure the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Assembly contributed to representation of Indigenous people
- Would an assembly be appropriate, or should there be separate Assemblies for Aboriginal people and Torres Straight Islanders

12. Would dedicated seats enhance the participation of Indigenous people in the democratic process in Queensland?

Yes

13. Are dedicated seats a good idea? Why or why not?

Yes.

Empowers indigenous peoples by having Indigenous Representatives.

Rights some injustices of the past.

Will help alleviate many of current problems faced by indigenous people.

For many years we have had identified indigenous positions in the public service and government departments so it seems logical to have dedicated seats.

Representatives have hands on experience with issues they are dealing with. They would not be as far removed from the issues as the current Members.

14. If dedicated seats were to be introduced, how should they operate?

- How many dedicated seats should there be?
- 2 Torres Strait Islander seats and 3 Aboriginal
- In what ways, if any, should the role and functions of members in dedicated seats differ from members in other seats?
- Additional issues to address- specific indigenous issues. They would also be included in debate /voting on all issues to encourage and develop participation in mainstream issues.
- - How should members in dedicated seats be selected?
- A vote from whole electorate to decide who is selected, indigenous and non-indigenous. All indigenous people to be encouraged to stand for selection.
- Should people whom vote for members in dedicated seats also be able to vote for members in their general electorate?
- Yes.

15. Should there be a referendum about the introduction of dedicated seats?

No.

16. Should Queensland's electoral system seek to achieve representation of minority groups in Queensland?

No, as Indigenous issues are totally different from other 'minority groups'. Minority groups may suffer disadvantage, but the issues that have led to the situation Aboriginal peoples find themselves in today are the result of past government policies.

17. Should the electoral system be reviewed to ensure that it is the most effective electoral system to represent the diverse interests of the Queensland community?

Yes as the fact that indigenous peoples are not being represented effectively proves there is a dire need to review the current system. In light of evidence from other countries that have designated seats, we need to develop a model that shows we are using Best Practice.

18. Would a different electoral system be likely to ensure greater representation of Indigenous people?

Yes so long as it was set up to address these issues and wasn't just changed.

19. What other strategies could be used to enhance the participation of Indigenous people in the democratic process in Queensland?

Regular review of any new system.

20. What strategies or combination of strategies would best achieve enhanced participation of Indigenous people in the democratic process in Queensland?