

**Queensland
Government**

Judy Spence MP

Our ref: MC02/1679

- 4 JUN 2003

Ms Karen Struthers MP
Chair
Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Minister for
Families

Minister for
**Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Policy**

Minister for
Disability Services

Minister for
Seniors

Dear Karen

Thank you for your letter of 12 December 2002 requesting feedback on the Issues Paper entitled *Hands on Parliament – A Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Participation in Queensland's Democratic Process*. I note that you have also written to Mr Frank Rockett, Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP).

I commend the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee for undertaking this inquiry as an important first step to ensuring that the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are fully represented in Queensland's system of Government.

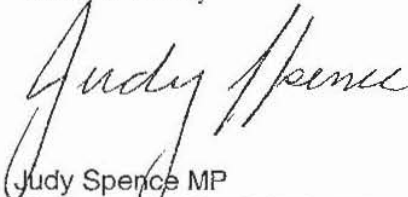
DATSIP officers have reviewed this Issues Paper. A number of general comments on initiatives to enhance participation are provided below for your consideration:

- It should be recognised that Indigenous people do participate in the democratic process through their involvement in lobby groups and through leaders who lobby senior levels of government and politicians;
- Increased civics education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland has the potential to increase their understanding of the democratic process;
- Increased voter education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland has the potential to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' understanding of the election process;
- Communication methods used to convey electoral information should be appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly remote communities. The use of Indigenous radio in remote communities and the use of community newsletters in larger centres may be considered;

- Increased employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within key agencies such as the Queensland Electoral Commission, the Commonwealth Electoral Commission, Queensland Parliament and Electoral offices, etc. will facilitate culturally appropriate and inclusive service provision. This should also result in a more ready acceptance of the role of these agencies and knowledge transferral of these roles to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the community;
- Parliamentary fellowships as undertaken by Federal Parliament in 2002 for representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are likely to facilitate an increased understanding of Parliament and its role and potentially a transferral of this knowledge across the community;
- Active initiatives to support the involvement of a greater number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples, especially those from rural and remote areas, in Youth Parliament will assist in stimulating awareness of democratic processes amongst young Indigenous peoples; and
- Initiation of a Queensland Local Government Aboriginal Mentoring Program would increase the understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of local government, its role and its structures and is likely to have some flow on effect to State government and potentially, Federal government.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact Ms Marjorie Weber, Acting Manager, Policy Development Branch, Policy Directorate, DATSIP on 3224 8312.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judy Spence', written in a cursive style.

Judy Spence MP
Minister for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Policy