

DEPARTMENT OF THE STATE
PARLIAMENT
DATE 293
PRESENTED 24 FEB 1977

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA (the Senate)

REPORT FROM THE
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL
LAND RIGHTS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

(Being a report that the Committee
has been unable to complete its
Inquiry because of prorogation
of the Parliament)

Members of the Committee

Chairman	..	Senator N.T. Bonner
Deputy		
Chairman	..	The Hon. G.M. Bryant E.D., M.P.
Members	..	Senator the Hon. J.L. Cavanagh
		Senator F.M. Chaney
		Senator R.N. Coleman
		Senator B.F. Kilgariff
		Senator E.A. Robertson
		Mr S.E. Calder D.F.C., M.P.
		Mr P.H. Drummond M.P.
		The Hon. L.R. Johnson M.P.
		Mr R.M. McLean M.P.
		Mr P.M. Ruddock M.P.
		Mr L.G. Wallis M.P.
		The Hon. W.C. Wentworth M.P.

Clerk to the Committee - Mr C.S. Boorman

REPORT FROM THE
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL
LAND RIGHTS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

- 1 The Committee was appointed by resolution agreed to by the House of Representatives on 8 December 1976 and the Senate on 9 December 1976 to examine and report on:
 - (a) the operation of provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 relating to the identification of traditional owners of Aboriginal land and the means of establishing the views of such owners to the satisfaction of the relevant Land Council;
 - (b) the adequacy of provisions of the laws of the Northern Territory relating to entry to Aboriginal land, the protection of sites of significance, wildlife conservation and entry to seas adjoining Aboriginal land, and
 - (c) any other matters referred by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.
- 2 The Committee held its first meeting on 9 December 1976. Since then:
 1. some members attended a meeting of the Interim Northern Land Council at Batchelor in the Northern Territory and observed how the Council identified and sought the views of the Aboriginal traditional owners from the Alligator River area;
 2. informal discussions were held with the Northern Territory Chief Secretary (Dr G.A. Letts) on clause (b) of the terms of reference;
 3. informal discussions were held with the Central and Northern Land Councils on clauses (a) and (b) of the terms of reference;
 4. evidence was taken from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

3 The Committee has been unable to complete its Inquiry because of prorogation of the Parliament.

4 The Committee had proposed to consult with Aboriginal traditional owners during the week commencing 28 February 1977 but could not do so because of the prorogation. It envisaged if reconstituted to consult with such owners during the week commencing 9 May 1977 and to complete the consultations during the Winter adjournment of the Parliament.

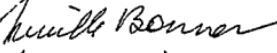
5 The Committee had also proposed to complete its public hearings in Darwin and Alice Springs in the period commencing 12 April 1977.

6 Under the new arrangements it would not now be possible to complete the Inquiry by the time specified in the Resolution of Appointment, i.e. 31 May 1977. All that would be possible by that date is an interim report.

Recommendations

7 As the Committee has not completed its Inquiry and the new Committee may not be able to do so in the time specified in the original Resolution of Appointment it is recommended that :

1. the Committee be reconstituted as soon as possible in the next Session of the Thirtieth Parliament;
2. when reconstituting the Committee, the Parliament give the Committee power to consider and make use of the records of the present Committee;
3. that the date of reporting be extended to 18 August 1977 and that consideration be given to empowering the Committee to report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives before that date if considered desirable by the Committee.


(N.T. BONNER)
Chairman