



CENTRAL DESERT NATIVE TITLE SERVICES

Our ref: 1401.1.1
Your ref:

18 December 2014

Hon Michael Minchin MLC
(Attorney General; Minister for Commerce)
Committee Chair
Joint Select Committee on Aboriginal Constitutional Recognition
Parliament of Western Australia
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

By Email: jscacr@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Hon. Mr Minchin

RE: Inquiry into the appropriate wording to recognize Aboriginal people in the Constitution of Western Australia – Invitation to make a submission

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission on the recognition of Aboriginal people in the Constitution of Western Australia. The Central Desert Native Title Services (Central Desert) board sees this as a great opportunity for the State to make a positive statement on the position of the first West Australians within the context of a modern and progressive society. We are concerned however about the opportunity for any meaningful consultation and consideration given the process that your letter outlines.

I am aware that the State has come under considerable criticism in recent times over its lack of consultation with Aboriginal people over a number of issues and given to the opportunity this constitutional reform offers I urge you to reconsider the consultation process and timeframe that is currently in place.

As a Board we would not want to make a submission that was not supported by our constituents. To put the State's proposition before our constituents and have it understood and considered is not possible within the time allocated and although you have flagged an opportunity to seek an extension I am advised that it may well be difficult to get a response to you before the committee is scheduled to table its report in March 2015.

My understanding is that it is not practicably possible to get on the ground to canvass this issue until late February or early March due to a combination of school holidays, law business, the weather and availability of staff. I have asked for advice from staff as to what is possible and I can convey that to you when it is received.

I would like you to consider some options for consultation within our region.

One option is that Central Desert could arrange to have the question included on PBC meeting agendas at various locations where your staff could attend and facilitate discussion to elicit the information they require to contribute to the process.

The second option is that Central Desert could design and facilitate a consultation process and from that make a submission based on our findings. We aren't funded to run this sort of process and would need to enter into a cost recovery arrangement with the State to be able to have this happen effectively.

In both of these instances we propose making use of general meetings that won't be held until March 2015 and then not all at once but staged along a manageable time-path.

Another matter for discussion is that you have posed an open-ended question and a lot of time could be spent on managing expectations in the community if it is put out for consultation with no parameters to the discussion. Is the State able to share all or any of its framework for considering the submissions that it receives. Such a framework would greatly assist those facilitating the consultation process.

Central Desert applauds you for asking the question but we urge you to consider our concerns and would be pleased to work with you to find a workable way to meet your needs.

Please contact the Central Desert CEO, Mr Ian Rawlings,
if you wish to take this conversation further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terry Grose', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

TERRY GROSE
CHAIRPERSON