

**SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION to the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO  
ABORIGINAL LANDS AMENDMENT BILL 2012**

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**Introduction**

I wish to add to my previous submission, specifically addressing the concept of reconciliation, which is cited in the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995 as the fundamental reason for giving land to the TALC. I quote: "*An Act to promote reconciliation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community by granting to Aboriginal people certain parcels of land of historic or cultural significance*"

A 2000 Legislative Council select committee examined reconciliation and in Chapter 2 of its report recommended:

- 1. The process of reconciliation be continued to enable not only Tasmanians, but all Australians, to come together in the community and provide justice and equity to all.*
- 2. The transfer of the proposed Crown land parcels should not be supported as it does not assist reconciliation.*
- 3. Adequate funding be provided to assist with environmental land management of the parcels of land that were previously transferred to the Aboriginal community by the 1995 and 1998 Acts.<sup>3</sup>*
- 4. The Aboriginal Relics Act 1975 be reviewed and the concept of site significance be introduced.*
- 5. Financial support and encouragement be given to the Young Offenders Program on Clarke Island.*
- 6. Indigenous centres of cultural excellence be developed to assist in the education of the community as a whole.*

Despite this recommendation, land was granted to the TALC and general community access denied, something which is against any idea of the general community having better contact and understanding of TAC members – the point of reconciliation.

This whole concept of reconciliation demands closer scrutiny.

**What is there that warrants reconciliation?**

The grievances appear to be:

1. There were atrocities on the natives in the 1800's
2. The actions of the British and settlers amounted to genocide
3. Tasmanian land was stolen from the natives

It really is pointless in arguing about the above because the whole approach by some members of the TAC is emotional and, as such, no logical reasoning is ever likely to be accepted.

Note that the three items above are those commonly quoted by TAC activists. It is they who appear upset at them, not the rest of the community. Logically it should be their problem to come to terms with the grievances, it is not something those outside can be expected to achieve.

**But how genuinely upset are Tasmanian Aboriginals about the 3 items above?**

I sense there are 3 main groups in the TAC:

- (i) Many who are content to move on, accepting that some unpleasant events might have occurred to their ancestors, but appreciate that they, as descendents, have a far higher standard of living

and life expectancy than anyone had 200 years ago. They appear content to be assimilated into the Tasmanian community.

- (ii) A group of activists who are genuinely grieved at perceived injustices of history and consider that they, as decedents, deserve special consideration. They strive to dissociate themselves from non TAC members.
- (iii) Another group of activists, who are particularly politically savvy and can see a potential power base can be constructed by emphasising and politicising grievances.

### How does “reconciliation” fit into the picture?

Group (i) is not particularly concerned, group (ii) are so emotionally involved there is nothing any Government or individual could do to make them feel “compensated” while group (iii) will continue to feed feelings of injustice to group (ii) [and worse, are inculcating these feelings to a new generation in a cult like fashion] in order to increase public and political sympathy so more land and other privileges will continue their way. Ultimately they aim to become a significant political force so they can demand “Aboriginal Government”. Sadly the general public is apathetic and disinterested in the issue, something the result of “political correctness” which is hampering public debate and media discussion.

Group (ii) hold deep feelings of resentment and believe historical myths with religious fervor. Like many who have faith in the tenants of various religions, there is little logic in their beliefs and those beliefs are not likely to be changed by any reasonable analysis. Most certainly the faith in their perceived injustices will not be changed by giving them land or other privileges. Doing that actually entrenches the feeling they have somehow been disadvantaged and deserve compensation, so it is hardly surprising they continue to ask for more, using the smoke screen of “reconciliation”.

### So have Government actions with land and other grants assisted in reconciliation?

Very obviously not as there are consistently more and more claims for land etc with absolutely no indication that this has appeased either groups (ii) or (iii). It appears as a bottomless pit. There have been absolutely no moves to share their culture. Quite the opposite, heritage items, which would be of interest to the rest of the community, have locations kept as close secret and are regarded, with hostility, as of no business of “whites”. Land granted to them is barred from access to non TAC members.

The aim of activists appears to be to divide the Tasmanian community into those who belong to the TAC and those who do not – a cultural apartheid. The fact that most TAC members have more European than Aboriginal heritage is conveniently ignored as is the established history that their non Aboriginal ancestors, the sealers, were responsible for some of the most brutal acts which occurred in the 1800s.

### So what is the answer?

Ironically it lies with the activists. They need to:

1. Reconcile themselves to living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where they are far better off than their Aboriginal ancestors
2. Show they are sincere in really wanting reconciliation by sharing their culture and inviting non TAC members to visit them on land already given to them. ***There has been no such move from the TAC in the 18 years past the first land grant in 1995.***
3. Acknowledge their predominantly European heritage and share commemorating it with the rest of the community. [*Cease their actions against Australia Day etc*].

But this will not happen while Government policies continue on the present path of more land and other special considerations. It will only slowly happen if Government makes it clear that present policies are to cease and **the onus for reconciliation is thrown back into the TAC court**. It will never be achieved from those outside because it is TAC members who are aggrieved, not the rest of the community, so it is up to them to make peace and extend the hand of friendship. Sadly while TAC demands continue to be met there is no incentive for TAC activists to stop continuing to divide the Tasmanian community.

Tasmania does not have the economic, and health problems suffered by the mainland indigenous population. There were no "Aboriginal problems" in this state 50 years ago. The problems that do exist now have been manufactured by group (iii) for political purposes and there are no actions any Government can reasonably take to appease that group. The bottom line is **that it is not in the interests of the TAC to ever achieve reconciliation!**

## **Conclusion**

Although the motives behind previous land grants have been well meant and have been a genuine attempt at reconciliation, they have had exactly the opposite effect. There is no evidence to show the TALC need to own any land containing Aboriginal heritage and giving them such land is having the affect of locking out access to it for the rest of Tasmanians.

It is therefore concluded that granting more land for TALC control is not only against the general interests of the Tasmanian community, it is evolving as against the interests of TAC members themselves as they are being cast as a separate entity in our population. This is not in tune with the concept of a modern multi cultural Australian community.

**The conclusion therefore must be that the Legislative Council should reject the ABORIGINAL LANDS AMENDMENT BILL 2012.**