



Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd.

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9 May 2006

Senator Steve Fielding
Senator for Victoria
255 Blackburn Road
Mount Waverly Vic 3149

Dear Senator,

Re: Senate Inquiry: Stolen Aboriginal Wages

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited (VALS) agrees with the Australian Democrats Indigenous Affairs spokesperson, Senator Andrew Bartlett, that a Senate Inquiry into Stolen Wages is needed. On 10 May 2005 Senator Bartlett will place a motion before the Senate there be a Senate Inquiry into Stolen Wages. VALS requests that you express support for the motion.

VALS argues that a Senate Inquiry is an important tool in revealing:

- If it was Government practice to deny Indigenous Australians in Victoria their wages/entitlements;
- If the above practice did take place, to what extent it took place;
- If the above practice did take place, how can justice for Indigenous Australians be achieved today.

A Senate Inquiry is a means to discover the truth about the following allegations that VALS agrees with:

- From 1900 to 1980s it was the practice of Australian State/Territory Governments to withhold wages and other payments from Indigenous Australians who were under the care and protection of the Government. Payments withheld included child endowment, pensions and soldiers' pay. The money was used as public revenue or disappeared through fraud or negligence.
- Media attention has recently been paid to the Stolen Wages in Queensland and New South Wales, but Stolen Wages is a National issue.
- Indigenous Australians' fundamental human rights were violated when the wages/payments they were entitled to were withheld. The failure of current Governments to recognise and adopt responsibility for past injustices is a denial of Indigenous Australians human rights.
- The disadvantage that Indigenous Australians experience today (ie: low socio-economic status) is a direct result of the practice of the Government withholding wages/payments.

We urge you to support the motion that a Senate Inquiry into the issue of Stolen Wages be conducted. If you have any queries, please contact Greta Jubb (Research Officer) on 9419 3888 or gjubb@vals.org.au.

Yours Sincerely

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited

Frank E. Guivarra
(Chief Executive Officer)