

19 Australia Court  
Scarborough 4020

14 May 2007

CMC Inquiry Into Policing in Indigenous Communities  
GPO Box 3123  
Brisbane 4001

Dear Sir

I refer to your advertisement in *The Courier-Mail* that appeared on April 14-15. The following submission may assist.

During my professional career of twentyfive years as Senior Marine Biologist to State Government, my duties took me afield into such regions as Weipa, Horn Island, Thursday Island, and repeatedly to Palm Island.

Speaking informally with members of indigenous communities from 1965 onwards, I gathered that no community was wholly homogeneous in its outlook. It seemed that each gathering was composed of a number of clans and sub-clans. Some seemed opposed to others. On Palm, for example, I spoke with one group that appeared committed to assist other members of their sub-clan, but were unwilling to help members outside this sub-clan.

Possibly, it may have to be accepted that there is little unanimity within certain communities.

One matter arises. I had experienced this feeling as far remote as Mornington Island, and Millaa Millaa, Tumoulin and Ravenshoe on the Atherton Tableland. This is a sense felt against the white man himself. Reasons seemed to touch on the early days when Queensland Police acted with undue firmness.

*In brief, then:*

Communities of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders seem not to be homogeneous;  
Some elements of these communities dislike others from different sub-clans;  
White persons are not necessarily held in esteem.

*Possible solutions:* Each community might be managed directly by three community members, appointed by ballot. These may be termed **Watchmen** (or some similarly innocuous title). Where a community becomes dissatisfied with the conduct of a Watchman, he may be removed without notice and a fresh ballot held.

A Watchman will have only powers to restrain low-level offenders (such as intoxicated people) and hold them in a specially-built "watchhouse", with one offender per room, and each room to be furnished in a manner superior to a jail cell.

Even if only one offender is detained, a Watchman must make enough inspection to ensure each offender passes his detention in safety.

These three indigenous Watchmen will have direct access to three resident white police officers for the purpose of reporting details of offenders held in the Watchhouse, together with the urgent reporting of more serious matters that must be dealt with as police matters, always in company with a Watchman.

These white police officers will make regular patrols of the community site, unaccompanied by a Watchman, simply for the purpose of endeavouring to establish friendly public relations. Where a minor offence occurs, the police officer will not intervene directly - he will use a mobile phone to call up a Watchman.

I have set out the foregoing purely as a possible part-basis upon which your policy may be determined.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E M Grant', with a stylized flourish at the end.

E M Grant