

fashion can forget about negotiation, they can forget about consultation'. But the book does not fully explore how and why the Goss Government acted as it did over land rights. Brennan contrasts the Government's actions on land rights unfavourably with the Fraser Island inquiry, and says:

The mode of consultation and introduction of this legislation marked the Goss Government's formal abandonment, or at least selective use from now on, of the Fitzgerald processes of public consultation, discussion and accountability. [p.153]

Brennan suggests that the reason for this is to be found in the racism of the Queensland electorate, which made Goss' strategy understandable, if not right. Although critical of the Government's failure to properly consult with Murriss, Brennan seems fundamentally ambivalent about the whole exercise.

Brennan records Government attempts to justify rushing the consultation and legislative processes on the 'principled' basis that a lengthy, public consultation process might have produced legislation less favourable to Murriss than that which was enacted because the mining and pastoral industries would have been able to mobilise public opinion against it. He seems to

accept this attempted justification as genuine, and to suggest that the Government's real failure lay in not obtaining agreement from Murriss that a truncated process was the most politically expedient way to pursue their interests. He does not explore the possibility that the process may have been adopted out of contempt for, rather than a desire to protect, those interests. The book never directly confronts the possibility that the Goss Government adopted the process it did because of racism in the Government itself as well as in the electorate.

Marcia Langton, employed by Goss as a consultant to develop land rights policies, wrote an article in Brisbane's *Courier-Mail* under the headline 'My Nasty Little Racist War' (7.9.91), after she resigned in protest at the Government's handling of land rights. In her article she describes how she was confronted by racists within the Queensland Government. She states her belief that Goss 'acted on terribly bad advice' and that he failed effectively to deal with the 'guttersnipe racism of his colleagues'.

There are possible links between the racism described by Langton and the wider problems in the Government's handling of land rights. The available

evidence suggests a form of institutionalised racism within the Queensland Government and throws into question the Government's claim to have been interested in protecting Murri interests. It is a shame that, although Brennan refers to Langton's article (p.128), the book does not explore this issue more fully. I would have liked Brennan to provide the greater insight into the political processes which he surely has developed during his long involvement with 'Land Rights Queensland Style'.

Nevertheless, this is an important book with important things to say, particularly about the Bamaga showdown and the Goss Government's consultation process. Despite some problems in structure and style, the book is generally informative and easy to read. It will be of particular use to any person seeking to understand the recent history of the Queensland Government's land rights policies prior to *Mabo*.<sup>1</sup>

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#### Reference

1. *Mabo v Queensland* (1992) 66 ALJR 408. For details on this case and why it is important, see (1992) 17(4) *AltLJ*. 157-165.

## L<sup>etter</sup>

Dear Editor,

Rosita Henry presented a very eloquent argument connecting the *Mabo* decision with the movement of the Torres Strait Islanders for self-determination (*Towards Autonomy*, (1993) 18(1) *AltLJ* 12).

I find it regrettable, however, that she failed to discuss what can be done by non-Aborigines to further the struggle of the Aboriginal communities for freedom during this, the International Year of Indigenous People. I find it really quite amazing that in a year when so much world attention could be focused on the

Aboriginal tragedy in Australia, so little is actually happening.

One cause which I believe strongly is worthy of our support is the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Watch Committee. In addition to bringing the ongoing problem of Aboriginal deaths in custody to the attention of the Amnesty International delegation investigating abuses of human rights in Australia, the Committee continues to pressure the Fahey Government to implement the 339 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and seeks funding from ATSIC.

The application to ATSIC has, however, been denied, and the Committee is only able to continue its important work on the basis of private contributions. Please join the Watch Committee, and send in a generous contribution to support their struggle for Koori freedom.

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