

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission for the Inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

To the Commission

My name is [REDACTED] and I am an older gentleman with an Indigenous mother and European father, and I am presently sixty years old. I'm the third son of a set of twins with the fourth son. One of us has obvious indigenous appearance, two of us have resemblance to indigenous appearance and one of us does not appear to be indigenous. Often during school days, we learnt to say we were of Italian or Greek heritage, to get along in society. My mother was part of the stolen generation, and she was devotedly dedicated to hide her indigenous heritage and culture. I assume it was some kind of protection for her children. I remember at high school receiving an assignment to write about my family history, so I asked my mother and she strongly denied my request and redirected me to ask my father. It was not until later at ANU when I did some research into my mother's family history, that I identified and started to learn her story, her heritage and culture. Sometime later I learnt that as a young infant, my mother was locked up in an indigenous camp of the time in NSW. The only picture of her as a young girl I possess is from this book of this particular Indigenous camp. The only other picture of my mother as a young woman was from her funeral service.

I previously studied law at ANU and joined the Law faculty with the assistance of the Jabal Indigenous Centre located on the ANU Campus. I thoroughly enjoyed these studies, and I still study the law today. One of the reasons I left my legal studies was the racism and prejudices in the English colonial laws from settlement to today. The temporal laws in that time without the racial biases would have led to a different story and history today for Indigenous people. The English were famous of the time for their arrogance and their biases around the world. Locke and Hobbs have a lot to answer for with their social policy of the time. The Constitution was written by the English white people with their racial biases and prejudices rooted entrenched into this document. As indicated by the refusal to incorporate a bill of rights, or explicit human right protections. Not many people realise that one of the first bills of legislation after federation was the Immigration Restriction Act. The Mabo 2 decision was brave, radical, controlled and long overdue. If you trace the Australian legal system all the way back to the Cooper v Stuart and the Privy Council and the early decisions, you easily recognise the colonial biases and prejudices. Unfortunately, these decisions are now deeply entrenched in the legal history of Australia. Not to mention the real reasons behind the Native title legislation as lobbied by farmers and other interested industries of the time and the Howard administration. I would suggest in my humble opinion that Australia amends the current constitution considerably to bring it into a true modern multi-cultural Australia, complete with explicit protection for human rights and respectful recognition of the first nations people. The Australian constitution is a

foundational governance and legal document for this country, however it was written with racial and prejudice themes, and it fails to protect the rights of people, it has limitations in its current form and could be greatly improved upon. UNDRIP has not been introduced into domestic legislation to the best of my knowledge and most likely will not be in my lifetime. The Australian government strategy appears to be let's not talk about it, let just forget about it and get on with running the country. This is a major disappointment for a proud modern multi-cultural nation.

Military service was another learning experience, as I had to join as a junior rank and was put in basic roles, I personally educate myself and I had studied rotary and fixed wing aerodynamics prior to attending. I additionally have an unrestricted private pilot's licence and have been awarded trophies in civilian flying competitions. I informed them of this, and again this knowledge was ignored or not believed. I spoke with a psychologist about this, and I could see the tears start to form and the sadness appear on her face. When I informed the command of these previous studies, I was strategically asked to leave the military, which I promptly complied with their request.

I have since joined the Australian Public Service and I have informed them of my previous studies and again this is either ignored or not believed. During my attendance at ANU Law, I did sufficiently well enough to attract the attention of the faculty. One lecturer mentioned my studies and dedication at a Legal conference they were attending. However, there is a strong deeply entrenched consciously or unconsciously bias in Australian culture towards indigenous Australians. I still have had to work at lower to mid-level positions. Since my intelligence, my skills, my knowledge and experience are not recognised or identified for whatever reason as they choose to dictate at the time. I have spoken with the diversity teams, I have been informed that the management has been trained on unconscious bias, and I have informed every manager that I have worked with since rejoining the APS. Yet this racism endures and it is performed in subtle and discrete methods.

As I'm approaching my impending retirement time, I regularly ponder this issue, and the only outcome that makes sense is the deep level entrenched bias and prejudice against First Nations people that permeates the Australian society. I am writing this to make this country better than I experienced. For those that follow me that must battle with racism. I wish you luck.

Recommendations:

Educate a new multi-cultural Australia, teach them to test the education system, travel and learn from other cultures, learn to identify the truth, not just what the schools or governments want you to know. Education is free if you want to learn. Amend our constitution and encompass express human rights or bill of rights. Remove the biases and prejudices from this important document. Departmental training is about education, not just running a course online, or attending a course as part of your duties. The education and the encompassing principles need to be present in everyday decisions, these executives and managers need to be aware of the implications of these decisions and to not submit to biases. Diversity teams have to support and advocate for their clients.

Sincerely [REDACTED]