

Submission to the Senate Community Affairs committee re the ‘Stronger Futures’ legislation.

As a child on the Atherton Tableland my playmates were aboriginal children, and I have been interested and involved in Aboriginal issues all my life. The father of two of my grandchildren is a Gundungurra man, for whom I have a lot of respect. I am very well aware of the complexity of the total situation in Australia.

I am concerned that the original ‘Intervention’ used the ‘Little Children are Sacred’ report as an excuse, without heeding their many recommendations, and without consultation, even with the whole cabinet at the time. Genuine ‘consultation’ with aboriginal issues requires long familiarity with each situation (which is always unique in its own way), and with **initiatives which have emerged from the people themselves**. For public servants to fly in and fly out, even for a day or so, and believe they have consulted adequately, doesn’t work.

‘Closing the Gap’ is a worthy enough aim – but not a project that can be orchestrated from Canberra in a decade or so. Certainly not without regard to the UN Indigenous Rights Declaration, to which we are a signatory!

There are so many things wrong with what is happening, which have been listed by other submissions. I wonder how much consultation there has been with the two groups in Canberra with longstanding expertise – from **longstanding consultation and familiarity from very many angles** – **AIATSIS**, and the **CAEPR** at ANU ? or with the **Aboriginal Congress**, which I understand was to have consultative status with the Government?

To hear only the voices which say what we want to hear is not consultation.

To bring in new measures as Regulations, without even Parliamentary discussion – is always dangerous.

I believe we should again have a Department whose whole concern is Indigenous Affairs, headed by people with a genuine long-term, on-the-ground familiarity with the issues.

Peace and strength for your difficult deliberations.