

12/04/2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs committee
Parliament House, Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

Re: Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill.

My name is Ann Creek, a Kaanju women from the Coen sub-region. On behalf of my late father Mr. Thomas Creek, traditional lands from his mother Maryanne Piper and his father Alick Niager. These also include the following areas of which I am the Chair, and a member – Toolka Land trust; Watharra Land trust; Kulla Land trust; Geikie Aboriginal Corporation which are in the Archer River Basin and Pul Pul Land trust, which is in the Lockhart River basin. Since the idea of the “Wild Rivers” declaration to be implemented on our traditional lands, we the traditional owners have been in a state of anxiety and disappointment. We are angry and hurt at the disrespect shown to us. We have never supported this idea and find it degrading to us as Indigenous people, that the Government has shown no guilt or remorse on what they are doing to us. Especially after the Prime Minister Mr. Kevin Rudd of the Australian Government signed a declaration on behalf of Australian Indigenous people to honour the rights of Indigenous people with the United Nations.

I Quote – *“Government shall consult and co-operate in good faith with Indigenous people to obtain their free, of prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them”*. It also states that Indigenous people have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development of use of their lands and territories and other resources.

In good faith we have agreed to a huge percentage of our Traditional Kaanju lands to National Parks and Nature Refugees, with the understanding that we the Traditional Owners manage these lands - this has yet to happen with National Parks.

We will certainly support the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill put forward by the leader of the Opposition – Mr. Tony Abbott.

For those of us who have lived here and practiced our tradition on our lands, we have had to learn to live and survive in two totally different cultures – our traditional laws and ways and in your white Government laws and policies. We have taken responsibility in adjusting our outlooks and way of life through changes in Welfare Reform. We have taken responsibility in creating full-time employment for our people and to develop economically to help us survive in an environment that has caused suffering and pain and huge obstacles to pull us down.

We've had enough of Government's so called Environmental policies and ridiculous management plans put in place on our Traditional Lands - Lands that we and our ancestors have managed successfully from the very beginning of our existence. To have survived, has come from our strength and the support, respect and advice given to us by our Regional organisations.

Regional Organisations that have been set up by us, the Traditional Land Owners, who have lived and grew up on Cape York, to help us deal with the threats and disillusion of Government regarding Wild Rivers and Land issues.

I only hope that through this committee we will be acknowledged, respected and supported not only as Traditional Owners but as human beings, who are capable of managing our lands, firstly according to our traditional laws and customs and then Government laws and policies.

Yours in respect

Ann Creek
Coen