

Submission - Section 18c of the Racial Discrimination Act

Jacinta Nampijinpa Price

## Summary

Section 18c of the Racial Discrimination Act should be repealed for the following reasons:

It encourages racism rather than discourages it, it finds racism where there is none and further divides us as a people. It tends to exclude from the national debate relating to our problems all who do not self-identify as indigenous. Many of those excluded are our own closest loved ones. Worse, it tends to exclude from this debate the most marginalised and most disadvantaged of Australia's indigenous people, the very ones who are most impacted on by these problems.

My name is Jacinta Nampijinpa Price I am an Alice Springs Town Councillor and campaigner against family violence. Recently I addressed the National Press Club along with Marcia Langton and Josephine Cashman about the silencing of Aboriginal women victims of violence and the realities of life in remote communities. My traditional Warlpiri culture is governed by stringent rules regarding the sharing of knowledge and what women can and cannot say in public. I am of the hinking that my people need to implement cultural reform to allow for more open and honest discussion so that women and children victims of violence are no longer silenced.

The domestic violence epidemic has been played out in aboriginal communities for over several decades now and has steadily worsened. In our current political climate freedom of speech has been suppressed by political correctness. This has contributed to the domestic violence epidemic we are experiencing. Activism once sought to champion freedom of speech but has now turned on those wishing to practice their right to use freedom of speech who do not follow the Left/Green ideology or simply if they are Caucasian addressing an issue relating to individuals who are not.

The popular ideology of the left leaning activists and safe cultural space creators is that all Aboriginal people need to be protected from white people. Political correctness is a set of rules that govern the way in which we use language about, or toward, minority groups so as not to offend them. But strangely people of Caucasian backgrounds are exempt from this protection. They are fair game. This means then if we wish to expose horrible truths in order to address them with an honest approach to bring about real change it can be misconstrued or deliberately targeted and branded 'insulting' or 'humiliating' to someone, somewhere who self identifies as indigenous. This is exactly what happened with Bill Leak's cartoon. According to the unwritten rules of political correctness one must not speak of the reality of the circumstances with which Aboriginal people are faced unless one is Aboriginal, or can claim to be. If a non-Aboriginal attempts to address any of these issues and an Aboriginal person is offended by this they can simply call 'racist' and the debate is shut down. This is exactly the kind of tactic that abusers of power, supporters of Aboriginal perpetrators of domestic violence and deluded individuals with an unhealthy victim mentality will use to shut down any honest debate regarding the plight of their fellow human beings. This is the case even though a clear majority of those identifying as indigenous produce children with their fellow Australians who don't.

What then are the non-Aboriginal people to do in order to address any issues their Aboriginal or Ethnic loved ones are faced with? How are they supposed to deal with the issues causing incredible suffering to their fellow Australians who happen not to be white? 18c negates the very idea that we are all in fact human and that we all hold differing opinions. It denies basic human nature that gives us the ability to generate critical thinking and the means to learn and grow. It is absurd that 18c ever became legislation. I have always argued and will continue to argue, as is my human right to; that Aboriginal people have never been given the privilege that those of the west have had, the right to culturally evolve. We have been told we must remain in an unchanged culture. We have been exempt from constructive criticism, as has Islam in the west. There are other points of comparison. If you criticize Islam you risk a threat to your life. If you criticize Aboriginal people in any way shape or form you simply are labeled racist

or bigot if you are white. You may also risk a threat to your life if you are Aboriginal like me. My life has been threatened because I wrote a piece telling the world that as an Aboriginal Australian I celebrate Australia Day. The RDA has made many who identify as indigenous believe that they are exempt from its provisions. That they can't be racist and therefore they feel free to insult, offend and humiliate whomever they please. They do it to white people and they do it to other Aboriginal people who refuse to follow the 'party line'.

In Alice Springs a member of the public is far more likely to be randomly assaulted, physically or verbally, if they are perceived as 'white' rather than 'black'. The grossly offensive racist insults are used liberally in the streets of Alice Springs against white people. I have walked the streets of this town with my white friends to protect them from this sort of thing. We are not aware of any complaint being made under section 18c of the Act resulting from this fact. It is not seen as a protection of the rights of Australians generally, only of those of designated 'racial or ethnic minorities'. White Australians feel intimidated, not protected, by this Act.

Both my mother (a senior Warlpiri woman and former Minister of the Crown) and I have been vilified in obscene sexist and racist terms on several occasions, each time by somebody who described themselves as indigenous activists because we refuse to be told what to think and say. In my case I've lost count of how many times I've been called a coconut and I have been called much worse. My mother was called a 'head nodding jacky jacky' by a lauded east coast Aboriginal activist. An invitation to address the staff and students of the Indigenous unit at Griffith University was withdrawn from my mother because she held views that were not the same for some of the staff and students of that unit. We have not once been insulted in racist terms by white people, not as far as we know. And if that happens we know how to defend ourselves. We aren't victims, we aren't afraid to stand up for our people and ourselves.

Our people are suffering and their problems are daunting and complex. We will not find the answers if we are denied the right to take part in an open and honest debate. We can't do that without offending those who are ideologically committed to the party line that has been laid down by the activists of the eastern cities and their white allies. They are educated, speak English and know how to use the system against anybody they disagree with. We speak for the most marginalized, those who the education system has failed, who are often illiterate and don't speak standard English. It is not just the white people who are closed down, it's also the most marginalized and least powerful of the Aboriginal population who are denied a voice by the self appointed spokespeople who know nothing of the circumstances in which they live. Agenda is dominated by those least affected by these issues. The agenda is controlled by English speaking, Aboriginal middle class ignorant of the values and issues of remote speakers of traditional languages and Kriols.

I was recently asked to take part in a debate on the final episode of First Contact on SBS. I was given little opportunity to discuss the very critical issue of domestic violence in remote Aboriginal communities but this was not pertinent to the program. Timmy Burarrwanga from North West Arnhem land, a Yolngu Matha speaker was asked if he felt that some of the strangers that visited his country in the show were racist. He said

‘When I look at them I don’t see racism, I see ignorance’. He also said he didn’t view them as strangers in his country because they too were Australian. The rest of the episode was then taken over by English speaking Stolen Generation representatives who would ultimately have the last say on any matter. What Timmy said is the way I was taught by my Warlpiri grandparents and mother. I was taught to relate to white people as a teacher. My Warlpiri grand parents were in their early adolescence or late childhood when they first saw white people. I was also taught to act as a teacher for my people and for white people in order to create understanding both ways. I was taught to respect both sides and to look for answers to problems from both sides.

18c of the RDA encourages rather than discourages racism. It treats us Aboriginal Australians as infants who can’t speak or stand up for ourselves. It treats non-Aboriginal people as if they have no right to hold an opinion about anything that relates to us especially the problems of our own making that are killing us. White people are frustrated and insulted by that. They are not game to speak out. That should never be allowed to happen in a democracy. The way to beat racism is through debate not the closing down of debate. The way forward for our people is cultural evolution. We have an absolute right to find our own solutions, to find our own way forward out of this misery without being vilified by those who claim to be on our side and claim to speak for us.

In closing 18c is not protecting anybody but instead being used to vilify innocent people in order to satisfy another’s insecurities. A healthy individual knows that responsibility for ones feelings belongs to themselves not to external factors.