

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Program: Australian Human Rights Commission

Question No. SBE16/109

Senator Reynolds asked the following question at the hearing on 12 December 2016:

Senator REYNOLDS: Okay. The police commissioner of Western Australia, who deals with these situations, as well as Marcia Langton and two other Indigenous women came out and said that not only was the cartoon correct, but the three women were also talking about how they saw that the use of 18C and the criticism of the cartoon was actually reverse discrimination because it prevented terrible social issues that they experience and that the cartoon was depicting from being aired publicly and dealt with. Do you see any reverse discrimination in that? Do you understand what they are talking about?

Prof. Triggs: Again, their comments are comments they made in the media. They are not relevant to my job or the role of the commission at all, and I would not comment on the accuracy or otherwise of their observations. They are simply making observations in the public arena.

...

Senator REYNOLDS: I understand the Human Rights Commissioner is not here for very good reasons. Have either of you or have any of your staff contacted Marcia Langton and the other ladies to get more information about their allegations about these breaches of human rights?

Prof. Triggs: I will take that on notice. I think a member of the commission staff may well have done.

CHAIR: Isn't it your responsibility as president to make the inquiry?

Prof. Triggs: Again, I would not personally necessarily make the inquiries myself. The commissioner or, in this case, the Deputy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner would make that inquiry. So I will see whether an inquiry has been made of Professor Langton or of the Western Australian police commissioner.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Australian Human Rights Commission President or Deputy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner have not contacted Professor Marcia Langton or the Western Australian Police Commissioner in relation to their observations on the Bill Leak cartoon published in the Australian on 4 August 2016.