

From: Phil Hunt

Sent: Wednesday, 8 August 2007 10:23 PM

Cc: Adams, Judith (Senator); Joyce, Barnaby (Senator); Birmingham, Simon (Senator); Trood, Russell (Senator); Parry, Stephen (Senator); Sterle, Glenn (Senator); Troeth, Judith (Senator); Nettle, Kerry (Senator); Evans, Chris (Senator); Bartlett, Andrew (Senator); Ferguson, Alan (Senator); Hutchins, Steve (Senator); Johnston, David (Senator); Faulkner, John (Senator); Hogg, John (Senator); Carr, Kim (Senator); Wong, Penelope (Senator); senator.campbell@aph.gov.au; Fifield, Mitchell (Senator); Chapman, Grant (Senator); Fierravanti-Wells, Concetta (Senator); Colbeck, Richard (Senator); Cormann, Mathias (Senator); Crossin, Patricia (Senator); Wortley, Dana (Senator); Ray, Robert (Senator); Scullion, Nigel (Senator); Stephens, Ursula (Senator); Allison, Lyn (Senator); Barnett, Guy (Senator); senator.bernard@aph.gov.au; Humphries, Gary (Senator); Eggleston, Alan (Senator); Patterson, Kay (Senator); Ronaldson, Michael (Senator); Fisher, Mary Jo (Senator); Hurley, Annette (Senator); Conroy, Stephen (Senator); Coonan, Helen (Senator); Webber, Ruth (Senator); Watson, John (Senator); O'Brien, Kerry (Senator); Polley, Helen (Senator); Sherry, Nick (Senator)

Subject: Aboriginal Land

Dear Senators,

My local member is Mr Howard. I have written to him about my grave concerns regarding his proposed changes to laws affecting Aboriginal land. I do not feel any hope that he has the best interests of Aboriginal people, otherwise he would take a few more careful steps 'with' Aboriginal people, rather than trying to implement policies 'for' them.

I have worked with Aboriginal people across Australia for many years. As someone who grew up with limited knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture, and who has had the opportunity to learn a little, I am appalled at how biased and limited wider Australia's education of our shared past is. We, as a group of people who have inherited the name 'Australians', have carried out appalling practices against the different Indigenous groups of this continent. Not just against the Darug and Dharawal of Sydney in 1788, or the Wiradjuri in 1830s, or the Bandjalung or the Nyiampa later that century. We have continued, tribe after tribe, year after year, decade after decade. If someone were to invade Portugal and claim Europe, what would the reaction be if, in 150 years time they were to tell the Russians they had no legal claim - it was lost with Portugal?

The Howard Government's plans for removing the permit system, taking compulsory leases and so on is just another forced removal, another dispossession, another disregard for the only people who have survived every climatic challenge thrown at this continent for millenia. Within 2 years of the First Fleet's move to Sydney from Botany Bay to access clean water, they had made the Tank Stream unuseable. This is our shared heritage - the polluters vs the sustainable hunter-gatherers.

We need Indigenous land management expertise. We need to give Indigenous communities some self-respect and also give the wider community an understanding of the myriad things they can be respected for. Sending the Army and Police in a new invasion is just that. A continuity of bad policy.

Please, please, please - work 'with' these people, not against them. This knee-jerk reaction will lead to another cycle of loss and disintegration. These are the real causes of self harm and abuse.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Hunt