

From: Gaye Mitchell

Sent: Thursday, 9 August 2007 11:10 PM

To: Abetz, Eric (Senator); 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); 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); Siewert, Rachel (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: Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill

Importance: High

Dear Senators,

I write as a social worker with more than 30 years of experience, mostly in child and family welfare. I write to urge you all to vote against the Bill.

I am troubled by the overriding of the *Racial Discrimination Act*, and by the rushed nature of the process, without proper consideration of the knowledge and information available which would demand different and more effective action in relation to child and family welfare issues in Aboriginal communities.

The writers of the *Little Children Are Sacred* have spoken out against the action being taken by the Federal government. The Bills ignore the recommendation of this report, including the first one: that governments and Indigenous community leaders to get together to come with a comprehensive plan to deal with issues of child abuse in Indigenous communities. Professional knowledge and research is clear that the most effective intervention occurs where those who intervene work jointly with those who are to be helped. We have years and years of ineffective, top down, bureaucratic intervention which has failed the aboriginal people.

As I understand it, the bills seize Aboriginal land, remove Aboriginal communities' ability to have a say on who can come onto their land, force Aboriginal boards of directors to accept Canberra bureaucrats into their board rooms and make Aboriginal people more dependent on the bureaucracy. Permits under the current Act allow Traditional Owners to control who comes onto their land, but there has always been an exception for police and for people exercising a statutory function.

The words 'children' or 'child' do not appear in the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bills*. They have nothing to do with protecting children.

Any serious action on Aboriginal child abuse should draw on the Emergency Response and Development Plan developed by the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory, the expertise of organizations like the Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care and Aboriginal professionals like Professor Judy Atkinson.

I would therefore ask you to take a principled stand and vote against this bill.

Yours sincerely,
Gaye Mitchell, B.A. Dip Soc Stud, Ph.D.