

From: DAVID BARNETT

Sent: Thursday, 9 August 2007 6:11 PM

To: Legal and Constitutional, Committee (SEN)

Subject: Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bills.

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Secretary,

I am writing to express my concern at the proposed changes to the NT Land Rights Act in the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bills.

The Federal Government's Legislation passed in the Lower House is an ill considered response to the 'Little Children are Sacred' report. I am concerned that the Federal Government's response and legislation to enact the response is short-sighted, lacks sufficient consultation with Indigenous leaders and fails to implement any of the Little Children are Sacred report's 97 recommendations. The Inquiry made 97 recommendations. These include action to: improve school attendance; provide education campaigns on child sexual abuse and how to stop it; reduce alcohol consumption in Aboriginal communities; build greater trust between Government departments, the police and Aboriginal communities; strengthen family support services; empower Aboriginal communities to take more control and make decisions about the future; and appoint a senior, independent person who can focus on the interests and wellbeing of children and young people, review issues and report to Parliament.

These Bills override the Racial Discrimination Act. These Bills have been hastily constructed and rushed through parliament without proper scrutiny. Such Bills are expensive political 'quick-fixes' that may in the long-term do more harm than good. They have been rushed into parliament and do not allow for thought and due consideration. These Bills ignore long term objectives and clear targets for improvement, like those proposed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma. The key ingredients for long-term success in health and well-being for children and adults in Aboriginal communities includes; goal-setting within specific time-frames, adequate investment, political accountability and a sense of national leadership are lacking in these Bills.

The electorate is right to be cynical about the lack of scrutiny of any legislation and wonder about 'hidden agendas' in such legislation.

I ask you to recommend that more time can be given in an effort to secure bipartisan support at all levels of government to achieve long term solutions for Indigenous children's welfare. Indigenous children deserve a considered response that is not party political.

Yours sincerely,

David Barnett