

From: Ken Blackman

Sent: Thursday, 9 August 2007 10:25 PM

To: Legal and Constitutional, Committee (SEN)

Subject: NT Indigenous bills hearing submission

The Chairperson,
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee

I am very concerned about the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bills. Apart from the initial sweep of child health checks, they appear have nothing to do with protecting children.

- These bills are racially discriminatory. Why do we have a RDAAct if it can be set aside at whim?
- The first recommendation of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report was for governments and Indigenous community leaders to get together to come with a comprehensive plan to deal with issues of child abuse in Indigenous communities. Federal Government has ignored this advice. **Why?**
- The report also stresses repeatedly the need for long-term, planned revitalisation of fundamental living conditions in Aboriginal communities.... maybe there is a need for some consolidation of such communities; show the public - and the communities - why and how, but build into the second phase of the response to the report real health and jobs and school revolution. With some reasonable obligations maybe!
- The bills seize control of dozens of key settlement areas of Aboriginal land; nowhere is it shown why this is an essential part of a response to the report.
- What is the function and urgency of the suspension of the NT Indigenous lands entry permit system? There has always been an exception for police and for people exercising a statutory function.
- These measures ignore decades of advice of Indigenous leaders and experts whose calls for urgent action have also been ignored. 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 Professors Judy Atkinson, Fran Baum and Ian Anderson.

I want all senators to speak out about the major defects in these bills, and to pass only the sections of the legislation endorsing to and funding the initial health checks, now proceeding.

The rest should be sent back to the House for radical revision!

Yours faithfully

Ken Blackman