



PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Exhibit 13

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Bec Mac: Hi, Bec Mac here for the fake art campaign here in Western Australia, and I'm talking to an amazing woman. This is Miranda Farmer, who is Peter Farmer's wife. How are you going, Miranda?

Miranda Farmer: Good.

Bec Mac: Now, we're actually sitting in one of Peter's works here, so this has been part of a collaboration with the City of Perth.

Miranda Farmer: Yeah, it's called the Historic Heart project.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Miranda Farmer: Really the east end of the city hasn't looked so good recently, and they did a project called Historic Heart that's really trying to revamp it by putting some pretty good-looking artwork out and about.

Bec Mac: Yeah. It's fantastic. Now, how does fake art—Aboriginal art and Torres Strait Islander art—impact on the community and the culture of people—Indigenous people?

Miranda Farmer: You've got to remember Aboriginal culture is an oral history. We don't have a written history, so the art is a really, really important tool. It's a communicator, so it communicates our stories. It communicates our language. It communicates everything about our history—the whole bit. The whole part of the culture is really embedded in the artwork, isn't it?

Bec Mac: Yeah, yeah. And so tell us more about why it's so important to protect it.

Miranda Farmer: I think just, with just about everything that's sort of out there, the mass production stuff is really like putting something on an assembly line. And this is a 50-60,000-year-old culture that just can't be put on an assembly line, you know. It can't be delivered or even presented in that way or sold, because, like Peter was saying earlier, you know, he's trying to make a living as an artist. He's trying to make people in the wider community understand culture, history, heritage—all the really important stuff. And it's quite beautiful, isn't it?

Bec Mac: Yeah.

Miranda Farmer: You know, there's nothing else like it in the world, and Aussies don't know, really, what they've got, you know.

Bec Mac: I know. We just take it all for granted. It's outrageous. Now, you're part of the development of the law code, and you had a meeting with Peter Garrett you were telling me a bit about earlier, but has this got any power in the game at the moment to actually stop fake art happening?

Miranda Farmer: We were lucky enough to get down to Kidogo Arthouse and do the launch here in WA of what they call a code of conduct. And the code of conduct, as far as people like Peter Garrett and other people in creative industries—music, art, the whole sort of gamut of it—was about asking people in that industry, especially Aboriginal art, to have a code or to have some level of integrity. We're talking about an industry that has no regulator, you know. It's a multibillion-dollar industry that brings billions of dollars into this country annually that is not being regulated in any way. There's no ability for art centres to really have a guide. It's just a guide that is really needed in the Aboriginal arts industry, particularly to look after the artists.

Bec Mac: Yeah, and that's amazing considering that nearly every other industry's regulated, but this is such a massive economy and potential economy coming back to the community that has no control or law around it.

Miranda Farmer: Nothing, nothing. The code of conduct was an idea that was launched. Peter Garrett and other politicians really wanted to say to arts industry owners—this is gallery owners and people who sell it—'You know, you've got a conscience. Do the right thing. Talk with the artist. Make agreements that are good agreements.' They were given that opportunity and they didn't do anything with it, for the simple fact of the matter they didn't really want to. It's, as I said—

Bec Mac: You never trust anyone—ha!

Miranda Farmer: a multibillion-dollar industry that they're still—you know, it's like talking to a child. You know, you want something. There are rules around how you go about getting it, and keeping and maintaining some level of integrity. They've been given that opportunity already for quite a long time now.

Bec Mac: Yeah, and now it's time to actually make it illegal. Exactly. So what can we do? What more can we do to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to promote and create their work?

Miranda Farmer: I think definitely engage with an artist. If you can't find one and you don't know one, go online. Google is an amazing tool. You'll find one that lives here in the city. Peter lives here. Phil lives here. There are a lot of Aboriginal artists that are living and working here in the city. There's databases like Artsource that you can access. There are not-for-profit government agencies. Get in contact with someone there. Go to Country Arts. Go to any art centre, and they'll tell you how to get in contact with them, because the thing is it's their livelihood. It's their income. It's their, you know, what they're making a living from that is important to them,

because what they're also—our Aboriginal artists are bound by their communities, so if they're not doing the right thing they'll get in trouble.

Bec Mac: Yeah.

Miranda Farmer: And so, you know, understand that they are practising in a way with a very high level of integrity.

Bec Mac: Yeah.

Miranda Farmer: So this is what you're paying for when you're buying something locally: you're paying for that person to go back to their land and sea council, wherever they are in the country, and talking to their communities, talking to their elders, talking to people about what it is that they are able to talk about. And that's what's been put on an art piece. It is their stories and their history, and it's all aboveboard. It's not something that's been ripped off. Why would you want to buy something? It's like buying those DVDs, you know, the rip-off ones, you know.

Bec Mac: Yeah, yeah.

Miranda Farmer: You don't want to do that. You're taking something away from that industry, you know.

Bec Mac: Yeah. And what more can we do as a community to, like, stop fake art happening, you know, rather than wait around for the law?

Miranda Farmer: If I could say, 'Don't buy it,' I would. Just don't.

Bec Mac: Ha, ha! Say it.

Miranda Farmer: Well, you know, you can go out to the airport right now, and you'll buy something that was made in China or Taiwan or—ha, ha! And it's not made or produced or done locally. It's on an assembly line. It's mass-produced. It's around making money for somebody else.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Miranda Farmer: The artists are not receiving that income. Do you see the billions and billions of dollars in our arts centres? No, they're just not there, because they're continuing to be ripped off, you know. Yeah.

Bec Mac: Thank you so much. So there we have it—more incredible information and the truth around fake art. It sucks.

Miranda Farmer: Yeah, it does.

Bec Mac: Ha, ha, ha! Thank you.