



PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Exhibit 14

The content of this exhibit is in video format
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Neil Coyne: Maybe some of the designs that are done around it. Peter's got about 34 or something—38 designed sculptures—

Bec Mac: Oh, yes?

Neil Coyne: all over the place. You go to Floreat Beach. He's got an Indigenous design surfboard.

Bec Mac: Right.

Neil Coyne: And so he's used design, you know, not just in two-dimensional where it's on paper and/or it's just drawn. He's using it on trees, on surfboards, you know. At the airport he's got these big shield shapes.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: And they light up. They go purple if you're a Dockers supporter—

Bec Mac: Ha, ha, ha!

Neil Coyne: or blue and yellow if you're an Eagles supporter, but they always change.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: And he's also done our design here, as you can see, of the noorn, which is the snake. 'Noorn' is my lingo for the word 'snake'. But he's used that, which is probably the most powerful totem of all Aboriginals. They, you know, call it Waugal, as we call it here, or the Rainbow Serpent.

Bec Mac: Yes. So what does that mean if you came across a piece of, like, fake art and that was on there—that snake totem? How does that make you feel, and what does it do to your community?

Neil Coyne: I'm only going from my experience.

Bec Mac: Yes, absolutely.

Neil Coyne: Yeah. When I've seen it, it wasn't a snake but it was a totem, because our animals are totems. And what they fail to realise too is trees are our totems.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: And so, when we show people and people are drawing it, we're like: 'You're using my totem. First of all, you're not family.' So it's, I suppose, cultural, I suppose, offensive—

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: to have that. And then you're like—well, when you ask them questions, they're like, 'Oh, no, this tribe draw it for me,' or 'this tribe', and they're like, 'Okay,' and then they say, 'Oh, that's from the South West.' I'm from the South West of Western Australia.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: 'Can you name the tribe's name?' And then they can't.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: And you go, 'Well, really you shouldn't be selling those.'

Bec Mac: Yes. And at this point that's all you can say, because there's no legislation around the fact that that is illegal. So how much would it mean to have it to go to parliament and for it actually to be legislated that it's illegal to make fake art based around Indigenous art?

Neil Coyne: I think that would be a huge help, especially with Indigenous people, and it would definitely give the, I suppose, more motivation to share their designs—

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: because a lot of people are really, I suppose, not shy but sort of—I don't want to use the word. They don't want to share their designs with anybody, purely because of that, because they don't know what's going to happen with their art.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: They're like—

Bec Mac: They're vulnerable.

Neil Coyne: Yeah.

Bec Mac: They can be exploited.

Neil Coyne: They're like, 'Oh, okay.' We want to give it, but we don't want it, you know, to be lost or be used for the wrong thing or someone to retrace it and then put their own signature on it.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: And I think, if parliament came into it and it did happen, it would open whole new avenues, whole new doors work-wise for people, especially for Aboriginal people. Yeah.

Bec Mac: And what more can we do, then, to support those Indigenous artists to promote their work and to make it—I guess make a living, a more, like, viable living?

Neil Coyne: I think that's a hard question. I just think it just comes to promoting and finding the right people to promote you.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: The best promoter is always yourself.

Bec Mac: Ha, ha! I totally agree. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Neil Coyne: Ha, ha, ha, ha! I believe just promote yourself. We've got Facebook. We've got Instagram. We've got Twitter. We've got—and a lot of people are on them. A lot of people are using that stuff.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: But, if you're lucky enough and you've got a TV channel or TV program, you can get the people that are in designs and do it. We've used guys like Mooditj Designs. Peter Farmer's come in, and I suppose the list just goes on and on.

Bec Mac: Yes.

Neil Coyne: You know, we're always looking for new design and new people to come in and show their stuff.

Bec Mac: And what do you think the community can do more before—if this legislation doesn't happen or before it happens—to actually stop fake art occurring?

Neil Coyne: I think, if you're a buyer and you're interested in getting painting, just simply ask them questions. Ask, 'Did you draw it?' or, 'Which tribe?' You know, just ask them simple questions, and if someone, whoever the seller is, they can't answer it then you can say that's fake art.

Bec Mac: Yes, yes. Well, thank you, Neil Viper. Ha, ha, ha! That's great. Cheers.

Neil Coyne: Thank you.

Bec Mac: Thank you.