



PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Exhibit 7

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Bec Mac: Hi. Bec Mac here, for the Fake Art Harms campaign, and I am in Richard Bell's studio, which is so fantastic to be here, because not only am I in the studio but he's here, ready, priming a fabulous canvas. It's bare. How are you, Richard?

Richard Bell: Not bad. How are you?

Bec Mac: I'm good. So what are you up to? What's happening? You've got a new piece of work coming along?

Richard Bell: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've got a picture I can show your viewers later on.

Bec Mac: Yeah, fantastic. And you've just got back from Vancouver. What was going on over there?

Richard Bell: There were some talks and a bit more shopping that was going on.

Bec Mac: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Richard Bell: And, well, I did the tourist thing there, of course—went up Grouse Mountain, had a look down at the city.

Bec Mac: Is it a bit of bling here? Is that a bit of New York purchase?

Richard Bell: No, no, no. That's what I bought after I won the national Aboriginal art award—

Bec Mac: Oh, okay.

Richard Bell: in 2004.

Bec Mac: Yes, very handsome—ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Now, we're here to talk about fake art harming. What do you see as the impact of fake art on the community?

Richard Bell: Well, it makes it very difficult for the artists, initially. They're the people most directly involved and directly affected. But it also has a much more insidious effect, and that's the cultural one. The ideas—you know, Aboriginal intellectual property is actually stolen in this process. And, you know, for our people, we've had a whole continent, you know, taken from us, you know. Most of what we have left is cultural, so, you know, to do this is quite, you know, the end.

Bec Mac: Yes, and it's so disempowering, isn't it, if you're continually robbed and theft just continues on a cultural level—on an IP level.

Richard Bell: Oh, for sure. You know, like, we have, you know, transgenerational trauma piled on top of this stuff. You know, it's stressful just being Aboriginal in this day and age, so this is another problem that is piled on top of everything else that we have.

Bec Mac: Yes. So do you think a parliamentary inquiry like this will actually do something?

Richard Bell: Oh, it'll do something. I'm sure there'll be a lot more white people in jobs after this.

Bec Mac: Yes. What do you mean by that?

Richard Bell: Well, this is what happens if you look at history. Whenever there's an inquiry, there's always the solutions, which are always bureaucratic, and the bureaucrats are almost always white.

Bec Mac: Yes. So do you think that's going to affect the outcome?

Richard Bell: For sure, definitely. It will affect the outcome. It depends on how deeply they want to look—you know, like, which areas of the culture they want to look, who they want to look at in this inquiry. I'm not sure what they are going to do.

Bec Mac: If you could make up three rules that would, you think from your perspective, would actually impact the situation, or even one rule, what do you think, from your perspective, would be the key legislation that needs to happen?

Richard Bell: Oh, jeez! I don't know whether it can be legislated, you know. I think what we have to do is respect each other and see where we're each coming from. There are so many things that we need to do as a community. You know, like, we're going to live in communities, so we have to work out the best ways of doing that. Sometimes that involves, you know, that old bugbear political correctness, which is actually, you know, just a requirement that people be nice to each other, okay?

Bec Mac: Yes. So you think there's no way that the government or I guess, as you're saying, the white infrastructure can kick in in some way that will be supportive and prevent fake art occurring?

Richard Bell: Well, it's very difficult. You know, we're living in a capitalist society, you know, where exploitation is rife and encouraged in very many areas, so it's very difficult for me to see that there would be, you know, any kind of blanket ban that would actually work. People would find a way around it. That's just my thoughts on it.

Bec Mac: Yes, yes. And so, coming out of that, what can we do to support and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in their art practices?

Richard Bell: Well, buy from Aboriginal artists. You know, go out of the way to research who's doing what. I think that kind of personal vigilance, you know, is necessary through so much of our lives.

Bec Mac: And what do you think, as a community, we can do to stop fake art? Like, if it's back to us as a community as a responsibility, for everyone out there, what message have you got?

Richard Bell: Well, call it out. It's the same with racism: you know, call it out. It's the same with sexism: call it out. You know, then we can deal with it. If it's out in the open, under the glare of the spotlight, we can deal with the issues.

Bec Mac: Yes. Well, thank you so much for your time, and you're going to show us what that piece is?

Richard Bell: No.

Bec Mac: Come on. We're going to have a quick peek of what's coming out from the master—ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Richard Bell: Oh, yeah. It's an image of a blonde woman throwing her head back, and she's saying, 'If only straight people would stop having LGBTQIA Plus kids!' Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Bec Mac: I love it! Thank you, Richard Bell. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Richard Bell: No worries. Thank you.