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Dear Committee

You might like to run your eye over this.

Governments are very powerful. If they can formulate and implement radical policies in respect of "boat people" surely they can do something to turn the tide for First Australians. Following the 1967 Referendum the Commonwealth government has the power.

This paper relates specifically to the Northern Territory, but has national implications.

If further interested, please see my book *Due Inheritance* pp. 83-95

Best wishes

Ted Egan

31/3/14

FACT

I have worked among Aboriginal people for over sixty years, in many different capacities and I have never met a First Australian person whose life has been enhanced by alcohol.

FACT

Aboriginal "imprisonment" rates are inordinately, deplorably high.

FACT

We have a huge drinking problem in the NT.

FACT

Not unexpectedly, many Aboriginals drink to get drunk. They were once forbidden alcohol. Now the mindset is "You drink alcohol to get drunk and, by extension, aggressive. If that is not the outcome, you've wasted your money".

FACT

All sorts of antisocial behaviour eventuates. Hence the high incarceration rates.

FACT

Everybody is quick to say "It's NOT just Aboriginals who offend". But.....

FACT

Various proposals are made, within government and connected agencies, about how to resolve these issues

FACT

The proposals range from prohibition to "dry days" to price controls to Banned Drinkers Registers (BDR) , to mandatory rehabilitation programs (MRP).

FACT

If we were honest, we'd acknowledge that no Whitefeller is ever going to be put on the BDR or MRP. We all know that whitefellers easily circumvent prohibition schemes, so let's start talking about Aboriginals only.

FACT

It is a safe bet that EVERY person being officially considered for BDR or MRP would be (a) Aboriginal (b) on Social Services.

FACT

It is also a reasonably safe bet that almost EVERY Aboriginal prisoner in gaol was unemployed – probably unemployable – at the time of conviction, thereby in receipt of Social Services payments, immediately prior to going to Gaol.

FACT

Aboriginality is based on self-identification. All Aboriginals – particularly pale-skinned ones – demand recognition on that basis. "I'm Yorta Yorta on my granny's sister's cousin's side and Wiradjuri from my grandfather's cousin brother". Tindale's map gives a good basis of traditional identification.

FACT

Every NT Aboriginal group has a "bush " home base e.g., centres for Warlpiri people are Yuendumu, Willowra, Alicurung, Lajamanu. These places invariably (but not always) are "out of town" and thereby remote from alcohol. *De jure* they are "dry" areas. "Tribal land" is extensive enough to enable consideration of appropriate places, out of town, for remedial training for all problem drinkers.

FACT

The Federal Government, under the heading of “Intervention”, has virtually co-erced thousands of confused Aboriginals to become the latest victims of “fringe-dwelling”. People who should be living healthy, fulfilled lives on homelands – established by the “land rights” movement of the 1960s – are unhealthy, illiterate, unemployable, required to be in unhygienic camps around towns like Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Darwin in order to collect minimal, marginalising social service payments. They inevitably become demoralised, subjected to crime, addiction and awful levels of violence among themselves and in respect of all law-abiding citizens of whatever background. They are despised at all levels as they proceed from Centrelink, to the bank, to the bottle shop.

FACT

The Federal Government, particularly under its Intervention powers, can curtail, control, pay – or not pay – Social Services.

FACT

Every anti-social person taken into custody, who is established to be a recipient of Social Services, could be taken before a local, all-Aboriginal Board of Control and be told: “Henceforth, your money is only available at your designated home base. Your life is in jeopardy and you are a threat to society. You need rehabilitation and it is our responsibility, along with Government, to provide you with the opportunity for a productive life. We’ll see you on Monday morning for your training course”.

FACT

The vast majority of Aboriginal homelands are “dry”.

FACT

Payment of social services only in their “home” country to people of anti-social tendency – but especially problem drinkers – ensures the following : (1) one day of the week, at least, they are out of town (2) on that day they are in a “dry” place (3) they are living on the home base of their people, the group responsible for their eventual outcome (4) it is extremely difficult for them to get a drink, so (5) their rehabilitation could start right there .....because

FACT

Aboriginals rightly insist that they –and only they – should be in control of their lives.

FACT

We owe it to them to enable their rehabilitation. They did not ask for the chaos that has invaded their lives.