

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION

Question No. 74

Senator Siewert asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2008:

- a) Given the objective of the \$4.2m extension of the National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task force was to facilitate better understanding of the nature and extent of child abuse and violence in the NT, what are your findings so far?
- b) What progress has been made in investigating and apprehending paedophiles?
- c) Have you exercised any of your special coercive powers?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a) The NIITF continues to encounter widespread allegations of violence, sexual assault, child abuse and fraud in all jurisdictions it has visited. The NIITF has also encountered ongoing deficiencies in the reporting of abuse and violence and in information sharing between agencies involved in service delivery to remote indigenous communities.

Some intelligence collected by the Task Force has identified child sexual abuse issues including under-age sexual activity perpetrated by adults and problematic sexual activity between children, as being issues of concern across most communities. Under-age and problematic sexual activity types of behaviour are opportunistic and do not indicate a sexual preference for children compared with pre-meditated paedophile 'grooming' behaviour.

Lack of reporting and continuing problems with information sharing point to a disparity between what government agencies understand is occurring in remote communities and what is actually occurring.

- a) As an intelligence Task Force, the NIITF does not investigate or make arrests. Where actionable intelligence is provided to the Task Force alleging serious criminality, the ACC disseminates that information to a relevant agency, such as a Police Service, for follow up at that agency's discretion.
- b) Yes.