

Dear Elton Humphrey

Senator Crossin requested the commentary I referred to from Opposition Spokesperson on Indigenous Affairs Tony Abbott.

The hotlink to this Op Ed published in *The Australian* is:

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23425365-5013479,00.html>

My (unpublished) letter of 26 March is as follows:

Tony Abbott ("Caring involves sharing", 25/3) is correct to identify the dangers of bipartisanship in policy making. After all, the stolen generations for which there has now been a bipartisan apology was the arguably unintended consequence of the bipartisan policy of assimilation. And Abbott is also correct that sound policy needs to be based on cogent argument that deals with known facts rather than on the size and eminence of the cheer squad. Unfortunately, he fails to heed his own sage advice by then focusing on the Rudd government's election commitment to reinstate the permit system on Aboriginal-owned land. He bases his case for abolition by referring to his own selected cheer squad: his parliamentary colleagues and senior Aboriginal people in the ALP like Warren Mundine and Alison Anderson. He would have done better to engage with the 80 per cent of expert submissions to the Howard government's review of the system in 2007 that supported maintaining permits. It is complete disregard of Aboriginal property rights, rather than any cogent link between permits and child sex abuse, that saw their unnecessary abolition last year.

Professor Jon Altman
The Australian National University, Canberra

I also mentioned in my evidence an Op Ed by Sara Hudson also published in *The Australian* on 21 February

<http://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&q=Macklin+mistaken+on+NT+permits+Sara+Hudson&btnG=Search&meta=cr%3DcountryAU>

Again my (unpublished) letter to the editor is as follows:

Sara Hudson ('Macklin mistaken on NT permits', 21/02, p.16) is arguably correct that private property rights are essential in any civil society. So why does she seek to deprive Aboriginal land owners of such rights? Her misunderstanding of the legal system is demonstrated by her view that it is Aboriginal communities that need to be consulted prior to the issuing of permits. This is erroneous. It is land owners that need to be consulted, much as we would find it reasonable to ask a non-Indigenous property owner or renter for entry permission. In 2006 and 2007 the Howard government undertook an opaque review of the permit system. Recent analysis by the Law Council of Australia of the 82 written submissions received (obtained under FOI) show that only six by private individuals supported abolition. Dangerous myth making by the then government saw a spurious linking of the permit system to child sex abuse and subsequent 'national emergency' legal amendment to abolish permits. As a policy analyst from the Centre for Independent Studies Ms Hudson should

champion the full private property rights of all, irrespective of ethnicity, as well as a strong state that seeks to guarantee such rights.

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These are two recent examples from *The Australian* of the concerted media campaign I referred to in my verbal evidence and equally worrying demonstrate the paper's reluctance to publish alternate views.

Yours sincerely

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