

29th Jan. 2010

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Attention
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia



SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL SECURITY & OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (Welfare reform and reinstatement of Racial Discrimination Act) BILL 2009 & the Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs & Other Legislation Amendment (2009 Measures) Bill 2009 along with the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Restoration of Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009

I submit that the Northern Territory Intervention was based on Racist Legislation and no amendments can disguise that fact. The necessity of having to suspend the Federal Discrimination Act and the Northern Territory Anti Discrimination Acts before intervening proves the racism involved.

Here is an opportunity to put in place legislation that will recognise the effect systemic racism has on Australia's Indigenous population and consequently its effect on the unconscious racist attitudes of many in the non-Indigenous population..

Both Acts should be reinstated in such a way they are made safe from future political interference.

It is past time Indigenous Australians are granted true freedom to manage their own affairs. They have never been able to escape the control of Big Brother.

Legislation is required which recognizes their Rights as First Australians, which ensures they have long term secure financial compensation and the ability to hire the expertise they need as they need it.

I submit that, apart from limiting the rightful freedom of Northern Territory Indigenous peoples, the NT Legislation has created a precedent that threatens the freedom of every vulnerable Australian and undermines our democracy.

Social Security Benefits are no longer every Australian's safety net, but have been transformed into a tool of social control and that potentially affects every citizen

Jane Paterson

The Income Management component of the law is demonstrably a clumsy method of ensuring the health of children at risk. A very few individuals may have felt the benefit, but the majority of NT Indigenous people have suffered insult, humiliation and damage and the cost to taxpayers is outrageous. How can the budget allocation of \$7,000 for each income managed (many as low as \$10,000) be justified?

The consultation process employed by Ms Macklin's Department, lacks credibility. Persons, who have more expertise than I, have questioned it. Apparently it was designed to produce the answers that suited preconceived Department notions. It seems once again that Australia's Indigenous population has had its voice ignored, and its body relegated to the lowest, most despised rung of our social ladder.

The issue that prompted me to write this submission seems trivial by comparison with those above. It is the way that income management has added to the difficulty those with no money have in paying fines (apart from the disproportionate affect fines have on low incomes compared to those on adequate incomes). The difficulty of accessing cash to pay fines is mentioned in Review & Irene Fisher of Katherine Sunrise Health Service report 2009.

It does demonstrate, I think, the way legislation affecting one section of the population, eventually affects us all. If it is bad legislation then it affects us badly. In Western Australia, where Income management has been on trial and where the State Government has passed legislation that results in record numbers of prisoners, many have been incarcerated because of unpaid fines.

These young (mostly) men are now likely to have entered the merry-go-round of prison, release and re-imprisonment. They are not often released into the community as reformed people. The system is brutal and educative programs few and faulty. The rest of us now spend much on protecting our homes and possessions from persons further alienated from society. Like Income management, the financial cost of incarceration is huge. Over \$100,000 per prisoner per year; \$200,000 for juveniles. Surely there are more productive ways to spend this money?

The necessity of arguing for the re-instatement of the Federal Racial Discrimination ACT & the abolishment of Income Management, makes me angry. It shouldn't be necessary. It is on a par with discussing whether torture should ever be condoned.

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