

From: Catherine Boyd
Sent: Thursday, 9 August 2007 8:13 AM
To: Adams, Judith (Senator); Barnett, Guy (Senator); Brandis, George (Senator)
Subject: legislation without consultation

Dear Senators,

As a territorian doctor, having attended the Garma festival - a 5 day festival in Eastern Arnhem land with over 2000 attendees, I am strongly in opposition to the governments proposed legislation which has occurred in response to the Anderson/Wild report.

From the Garma, a collaboration of international delegates from medical, political, legal, and economic backgrounds, it was clearly evident that there has been no consultation with indigenous communities about the proposed plan, certainly, the "taskforce" has operated quite independently from existing structures and health services, which lends to the question of how accurate can any assessment of theirs really be? Secondly, and ironically the proposed legislation hasn't undertaken any of the 97 recommendations suggested in the "Children are sacred " report.

The general feeling at the garma was one of sadness, impending doom, and fear of the governments initiative.

Please do not support the governments proposal, there is no evidence that it will work, and there is evidence to suggest it will only do harm. It is only perpetuating the already existing widespread institutional discrimination that occurs to aborigines.

What was also clear from the festival that the problems occurring in indigenous communities are not new, and that workable solutions do exist - if they are adequately resourced and funded, and essentially, devised with the consultation of the individual communities.

I have never felt more strongly about any political matter, particularly when it affects the patients I see every day. I strongly urge you to listen to a wide variety of indigenous leaders. I have not come across one health professional who works with indigenous people who feels positively about the proposed changes. The speech from Jenny Macklin at the Garma festival clearly indicated that she was ill-informed about the issues, and essentially supported the governments plans which has left indigenous and non-indigenous people having no confidence in either of the major parties with regards to indigenous affairs.

It is the responsibility of all Australians to protect those most disadvantaged in our society.

With kind regards,
Dr Catherine Boyd
Darwin.