

From: Ms Brown
Sent: Wednesday, 8 August 2007 9:04 PM
To: Barnett, Guy (Senator)
Subject: Protecting Aboriginal Children

8th August 2007

Dear Senator Barnett

I am greatly concerned with the current actions in parliament in regard the Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory.

After much reading and listening to all sides I urge you to support the Combined Aboriginal Organizations of the Northern Territory Emergency Response and Development Plan to protect Aboriginal children.

The plan was developed as an alternative to the current Government approach in overcoming child abuse in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities.

My concerns if we do not adopt as a nation the alternative approach is yet again our nation will go down in history as jumping in boots and all and doing more harm than good to Aboriginal communities.

Particularly with children who have been sexually abused. As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse myself, I know how important it is that children come forward them selves after preparation by adults to enable the children to feel safe and deal with the life long scares that are left.

The current plan shows very little opportunity for forward planning and for communities to be empowered in helping themselves.

The alternative plan is a comprehensive approach that gives priority to protection from immediate physical or emotional harm but also addresses underlying issues including housing, health care and education.

Unlike the current Government approach, the Combined Aboriginal Organizations' plan builds on the recommendations of the Little Children are Sacred Report and programs that are already working in Aboriginal communities. It adopts a partnership approach between Government and Aboriginal people and would strengthen the governance and capacity of Aboriginal communities.

It envisages the creation of a national lead agency to implement the plan and an independent monitoring and evaluation body to report on progress.

There are 68 actions in the plan ranging from developing an emergency response in conjunction with Aboriginal community representatives, boosting child protection

services, proper training of a permanent police presence in communities, tackling alcohol take away sales and buyback of existing hotel licenses and improved schooling strategies, to trauma counseling for victims of abuse.

Although the Prime Minister is correct to describe child abuse in Aboriginal communities as a national emergency, unless the Government works more closely with Aboriginal communities to overcome the problem, its approach is not likely to succeed.

Please support the plan developed by the Combined Aboriginal Organizations of the Northern Territory. I urge you not to vote for any proposed legislation in the coming special sitting of Parliament that is not consistent with this plan.

We look to you those in the position to help to do right thing by our fellow countrymen here.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Brown

"smile at others, give hugs, take naps, and have a happy heart!" "Until we extend the circle of compassion to all living beings, we shall not find peace" -- Albert Schweitzer