

From: Caninehealthfarm

Sent: Friday, 10 August 2007 2:26 PM

To: Legal and Constitutional, Committee (SEN)

Subject: Submission to Enquiry into NT National Emergency Response

**WE TOOK THEIR LAND; WE TOOK THEIR CHILDREN; NOW WE TAKE AWAY THEIR ALCOHOL!**

Mal Brough's wet canteens selling light beer in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory is a bit like his ideas – a bit light. His latest raft of law reforms smack of the worst kind of racism and political opportunism. They are a hotch potch of knee jerk proposals that in all likelihood will make the plight of Aborigines in the Northern Territory worse off.

Paternalistic racist laws are not the answer to alcoholism or child abuse. Prohibition as a policy has never worked and nor will it work on Aboriginal communities. It's a bit like the alcohol free zones. The people consuming the alcohol move. Aborigines will simply leave the confines of the community to get their alcohol. Brough's policy will create both more binge drinking and drink driving as Aborigines travel further to get their alcohol. Alcohol will also be brought into the communities, despite bans to the contrary, by non-aboriginals either seeking to make a quick buck or at the request of their Aboriginal friends.

Quarantining aboriginal welfare payments so as to force the recipient to spend it on children's food and clothing may sound good but its been tried before and dismally failed. It also humiliates the beneficiary because it says we don't trust you. It tars them all with the same brush and fails to acknowledge the majority of recipients who are not alcoholics or child abusers. It will result in aboriginal children being worse off because parents who are dependent on alcohol will simply sell their food vouchers in order to obtain more alcohol. The net result will be even less money for the essentials.

This Liberal government wants to be seen to be doing something about the endemic problems in Aboriginal communities. But the problems being talked about are not new and Howard has had more than a decade to do something about them and miserably failed. Nor is it true to say that other things can't be done about the problems. Its well known that per capita the Australian community spends less money on the education, health and social services for blacks than it does for whites. Why aren't case workers being employed to educate both young children and their mothers about good and bad touching and about their right to say no and to tell others if they are touched in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. The laws already exist to protect children in Aboriginal communities but they aren't being implemented.

Brough's latest hair brained proposals are racist and if implemented should be challenged in the Federal Court because of their violation of the Racial Discrimination Act. They impose restrictions on the black man that are not imposed on the white man. They degrade and humiliate rather than offer hope because they label all Aborigines as child abusers and alcoholics, which is patently untrue. Brough is a racist and he and the Howard government should follow the maxim of keeping their mouth shut if they can't offer something constructive.

Adam Bonner