

**From:** Cathy Humphreys

**Sent:** Thursday, 9 August 2007 6:51 PM

**To:** Abetz, Eric (Senator); Adams, Judith (Senator); Joyce, Barnaby (Senator); Birmingham, Simon (Senator); Trood, Russell (Senator); Parry, Stephen (Senator); Sterle, Glenn (Senator); Troeth, Judith (Senator); Nettle, Kerry (Senator); Evans, Chris (Senator); Ferguson, Alan (Senator); Hutchins, Steve (Senator); Johnston, David (Senator); Faulkner, John (Senator); Hogg, John (Senator); Carr, Kim (Senator); Wong, Penelope (Senator); senator.campbell@aph.gov.au; Fifield, Mitchell (Senator); Chapman, Grant (Senator); Fierravanti-Wells, Concetta (Senator); Colbeck, Richard (Senator); Cormann, Mathias (Senator); Crossin, Patricia (Senator); Wortley, Dana (Senator); Ray, Robert (Senator); Scullion, Nigel (Senator); Stephens, Ursula (Senator); Allison, Lyn (Senator); Barnett, Guy (Senator); senator.bernard@aph.gov.au; Humphries, Gary (Senator); Eggleston, Alan (Senator); Patterson, Kay (Senator); Ronaldson, Michael (Senator); Siewert, Rachel (Senator); Fisher, Mary Jo (Senator); Hurley, Annette (Senator); Conroy, Stephen (Senator); Coonan, Helen (Senator); Webber, Ruth (Senator); Watson, John (Senator); O'Brien, Kerry (Senator); Polley, Helen (Senator); Sherry, Nick (Senator)

**Subject:** Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill

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9<sup>th</sup> August, 07

Dear Senator

I am a Professor of Social Work and my work has specialised in the area of family violence and child abuse. I am profoundly concerned that the hasty passing of the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill will not be seen to be action taken in the best interest of children suffering child abuse and those living with family violence.

The legislation has not been given time by government members, opposition members, other parties or by the community at large to attend to the significant and complex issues which are raised. Of particular concern are:

- The overriding of the Racial Discrimination Act. This is a major issue on which internationally we will be judged and I would argue will be found wanting. One rule for Indigenous people and one rule for others is discriminatory and I would argue will be bitterly fought over and take the focus off the issues of child abuse and family violence.
- The overriding of Aboriginal rights to their land and the removal of the ability of Aboriginal communities to say who can come onto their land. This is a particularly important aspect of control and self-determination for Aboriginal communities which should not be lightly taken away. There are exceptions which already exist for police and statutory authorities. The issue of land rights and the permit system are already diverting from the focus on child abuse and family violence, which if the government intent was serious would not have confused these two issues.

- The lack of attention to children in the Bills which I understand do not mention the word 'children' or 'child'. This raises very serious issues about the intent of the Bills and contributes to concerns about their hasty passing of just prior to an election.
- The measures to control alcohol and substance use in particular areas are very complex and require high levels of community co-operation and support. Creating new 'dry' communities in which those dependent upon alcohol and drugs do not have immediate access to alcohol and drug rehabilitation is dangerous. Without crisis services, more dangerous chemical substitutes will be found. The infrastructure to intervene in addiction problems is an absolutely essential aspect of any policy to limit the supply of drugs and alcohol. Children will not benefit from addicted parents and other community members withdrawing from substances with no support.

The passing of new Bills in haste just prior to an election does everything to instil fear and cynicism and nothing to ensure the development of trust and co-operation in the affected communities. The Government has had many years to work on these problems and there have been a decade of reports which have been raising the issues of family violence and child abuse. *The Little Children Are Sacred Report* is a very comprehensive Report and the latest in a long line of Reports which have raised these issues. The Recommendations raised in the Report are not being implemented and again this raises major concerns about the intention of the current emergency measures.

I would urge you to vote against legislation which has widespread ramifications and which may have many destructive consequences and no real evidence to suggest that victims of violence and abuse will benefit.

Yours sincerely

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