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Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Little Children are Sacred Report” – Being used as a Trojan Horse?

The Howard Government are to be congratulated for taking on the “200-year-old-problem” of alcohol and sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities. Their intentions are honourable, but from the rhetoric it seems that the government and others have forgotten the history that today’s Australia was founded on. And sadly one must ask is the “Little Children are Sacred Report” and the violence now seen in some Aboriginal communities being used as a “trojan horse” to take away private protection and property rights. Rights that Aboriginal people have had to fight for over many decades. If so then we can only hang our head in shame that any violence against children could be used to political advantage against Aboriginal communities in this way.

Since the beginning of colonisation it has been the European culture and law that has brought violence, lawlessness and an immoral abuse of power to Aboriginal communities and people. Many Aboriginal elders in Arnhem Land today are asking if anything has changed.

Prime Minister John Howard, the Member for Bennelong, should know that the first Aboriginal person captured violently at gun point died within a day of capture. The second Aboriginal man captured at gun point and “assimilated” by Captain Philip was called Bennelong after which his seat is now named. History tells us though that sadly Bennelong died on the streets of the small colony of Sydney a chronic drunk not wanted by his own people or by those who tried to forcible ‘assimilate’ him. Yes, violence and alcohol in Aboriginal communities is a 200-year-old European problem that must be addressed and solved before it completes its violent destruction of the Aboriginal people of this country.

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Again, we have to applaud the Howard and Brough initiative to curb the “rivers” of white fella grog and deal with issues of violence against anyone in Aboriginal communities. Violence of any form against anyone in Aboriginal communities is simply not on. So we have to question why is it that the Yolŋu people of north-east Arnhem Land, as well as other Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory, are so afraid and worried about what is happening at the moment ?

Aboriginal leaders all agree that problems in relation to grog and abuse against children and women must stop. The Rev Dr Djinyini Gondarra said, “We all agree with the government on these two issues but what has taking entry permits off our main roads and communities have to do with stopping grog and drugs and protecting our children? Where did this violence against children we love come from, not from our Maḏayin law? It has been brought to our communities by white fella culture and law. And then it is also white fella law that usually protects the violators because they know the white fella law and language and we don't. It has been the outsiders in the past - contractors and the like - that sold alcohol and drugs to our children and our people were too frightened to report them to the police. Now if there is no permit system where can we go?”

Why has the government created a situation of trying to create law and order while at the same time they are spreading a situation of greater lawlessness? Taking the entry permits off main roads leading to Aboriginal communities and the roads in communities themselves can only lead to greater lawlessness. Every drug dealer, pusher and paedophile in the Northern Territory and beyond must be thanking Ministers Howard and Brough for thinking of doing them such a favour.

Today it seems that white fella law actually continues to create lawlessness. Djinyini continues, “How bad is European law when it does not protect private property rights? According to our Maḏayin law nobody can just take someone else's private property like the federal government is doing in the Northern Territory.”

“And why does the government always attack our traditional law? It is our traditional law that has kept our children and women safe for thousands of years. If only the government would stop and understand the real situation we might be really able to solve some of these problems instead of creating more. We thought this Minister was different and really wanted to help us create better communities by sitting down and listening to us. Now we are ashamed and confused as to who or what we can trust anymore.”

Rev Dr. Djinyini Gondarra OAM, Chairman
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