

To Whom It May Concern

I write in relation to protest the recent proposals of government to cut and/or restrict funding to what has become an integral part of the 'voice' of Indigenous people and subsequently a 'voice' of Australia. I refer of course to the Indigenous Television and Radio Industry.

Negative perceptions of Indigenous Australia to a large degree have and are perpetuated by popular press both electronic and print and by general societal attitude. Both of these mediums fuel each other. As W E H Stanner indicated in his famous 1968 'The Great Australian Silence' speech there has historically been a cultivated negative attitude in the broader society about Indigenous people and the issues that we face. This is prevalent today, Marcia Langton refers to this negative perception as the 'Australian Psyche', I have called it the inherent national blindness. Inga Clindennen states within her book Dancing with Strangers that if we live with a nursery version of history subsequently we end up with a population who cannot deal nor fathom the contemporary happenings of society.

This attitude has fueled the cultural divide that we as Australians face on a daily basis. This attitude has led to race killings, racial violence, blatant governmental and broader societal attacks. It has led to a depreciation of Indigenous culture and a perception that Indigenous people and issues are a problem of the undifferentiated other and not a problem that we as a country should face together.

What stands between this cultivated negative attitude and the truth? Quite simply one of the greatest tools to tackle this negative attitude is the Indigenous television, film and radio industry.

When you have art, you have voice, when you have voice you have freedom and with freedom comes responsibility, the responsibility that these organisations carry with limited resources is phenomenal. These organisations and their documentarays, films, radio shows and music have many roles within Indigenous Australia. They retrieve and maintain culture, they illustrate the amazing diversity amongst Indigenous Australians. They play the role of messenger and bring issues from across the country together. They create employment, training and programs that develop communities as well as individuals. They give a gift to Non Indigenous Australia that can only be given by Indigenous Australia. Of course they carry many other roles.

I am not sure what will happen to the Indigenous voice if this most important part of our voice is marginalised with resources yet again. I know we will still be here, I know that we will find ways to present the issues that we as a people face, I know that we will somehow struggle through. But I know also that should funding cuts go ahead that our organisations, programs and subsequently employees and their families and communitities will suffer unecessarily.

This is a turbulent time for Indigenous Australia, it is a turbulent time for all Australians. Quite simply, a denial or restriction of

Indigenous voice by cutting funding to these most important organisations is an indication of the inherent blindness to Indigenous issues by elected representatives in Government. It also indicates an incredible lack of sensitivity to basic principles of the facilitation of voice that an elected representative should know and carry with honour. 'That all people should be represented in an equitable manner'.

I would urge the readers to take a stand against these proposals, I would urge the reader to consider the cultural, economic and societal contribution that these organisations, programs and staff give to their communities, and to broader Australia.

This is not simply an issue of politics, it is without question an issues of voice.

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