



Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc.

MEDIA RELEASE

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ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE CALLS FOR PM TO CENSURE MINISTER MACKLIN

The CEO of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, Neil Gillespie has expressed concern about the conduct of Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin, if the startling revelations reported by the National Indigenous Times are correct.

It is reported by the NIT that Minister Macklin has supported the advice of her Policy Advisers that the Government should not consult with Aboriginal people because it is too expensive, will tie up too many resources and is unlikely achieve Government outcomes.

"If this is true and the Minister has not acted in the best interests of Aboriginal people and unless she changes her position, has no right to represent Aboriginal people at a Government level, or to be responsible for Aboriginal programs," Mr Gillespie said.

ALRM says the actions are contrary to the now famous National Apology speech by the Prime Minister in 2008, and its commitment in supporting the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

"The contempt displayed by her Advisers and her sanctioning of their conduct is even more offensive and reprehensible in view of the joint statement by the Australian Government, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Indigenous Peoples Network of Australia delivered at the 8th Session of the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues May 2009 in New York," he said.

This recent statement voiced in a UN Forum says:

"the Australian Government supports the Declaration: ... in the spirit of re-setting the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and building trust". The statement went on to say "that trust and partnership are essential if we are to fully protect the rights of Indigenous peoples. We recognise that we each have a part to play in ensuring Aboriginal people's rights are protected and their life outcomes are improved".

There is also the commitment under COAG to work with Aboriginal organisations on service delivery that appears to have been given little regard and the Minister's actions ignore - yet again the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which calls for greater engagement with communities and community organisations.

"It is fair to ask, hasn't the Rudd Government, and successive Governments before it received enough of so called professional advice from bureaucrats that have done nothing to address our social and economic disadvantage. Lets face it, these bureaucrats have had over 100 years of giving advice to Government to the detriment of Aboriginal people," Mr Gillespie said.

“Australia is already under scrutiny of the United Nations Human Rights Committee on a number of fronts including access to justice and Stolen Generations, and this just adds to our deteriorating international reputation.”

“We as a nation have no right to criticise other nations on their human rights abuses when we have not got our own house in order,” Mr Gillespie said.

For interview

Neil Gillespie is available for comment on +61417086025 or by email: neilg@alrm.org.au

FYI: The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc provides legal services and associated activities (legal aid and native title legal services, financial counselling, law reform and advocacy, the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme and community education) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in South Australia. ALRM is an independent incorporated Aboriginal community organization