

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Statement

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [9.45 pm]: I rise tonight to read a letter that I think all members would have received. I received the letter on 23 March. It was from Kado Muir a constituent of mine from Leonora. I think it is important to put the letter on the record. It states —

The following is an extract from a social media posting I forwarded yesterday, “Today we witnessed a most appalling display of insensitive State sanctioned violence and intimidation against Noongar traditional owners exercising their Sovereign rights to enjoy spiritual and cultural communion with the spirit of their ancestral leader Yagan on the sacred site that is Marta Garup. Yesterday we saw the State government issue fresh compulsory acquisition orders for James Price point after the courts ruled their first attempt to take the land was not legal. Western Australia is a State that steals thousands of dollars in wages from Aboriginal people for over half a century then offers to compensate that theft with a measly \$2000 ex-gratia payment. It is a state that if an Aborigine should die without a will then their possessions by law becomes the property of the State. Each of these legally sanctioned crimes are supported through laws and policies that offend the very notion of a civilized society, yet no one is held to account while Aboriginal people, especially our men, continue to be arrested and imprisoned, in my home region of the Goldfields at a rate of 16% of our population. If there is any common decency in this society that we (Australians) are so proud to praise then why is no-one holding Colin Barnett and the Government of Western Australian to account for what amounts in a civilized society to be crimes against humanity.”

I am forwarding this on to you as a member of Parliament to ask you to take immediate action in addressing this gaping disparity in the situation of Aboriginal people here in Western Australia. You as a member of Parliament are elected to enact laws and govern for the benefit of ALL West Australians, however it appears that in the case of Aboriginal West Australians you as a member of Parliament are complacent in your powerlessness to do anything that substantially improves the situation of Aboriginal people in this state. This is not a new development it has been a constant feature of the political landscape since William Dampier made his observations that “aborigines are the most miserable people he has ever encountered”. That observation has proven prophetic since Aboriginal West Australians have indeed become the most miserable people in this State, largely through the implicit and explicit actions of parliamentarians and then those very same members then choosing the path of least resistance when dealing with substantive matters of importance to Aboriginal people, matters that may improve the levels of common decency afforded to us.

The actions of this current Government is building into a disgraceful record of campaigning to undermine the rights, freedoms and indeed human dignity of Aboriginal Western Australians. Paternalistic comments from our Premier, “you’ve had your say now go home”, comments by the Police Commissioner, “every time we go out there we are costing the tax payer \$20,000” and I know the complacent perspective of each of you along the lines of “what can we do?”

Aboriginal Western Australians are fed up, we are fed up with your lack of action, your pandering to the lowest common denominator when dealing with us. The absolutely appalling and disgraceful ex-gratia settlement of only \$2000 for all the money STOLEN from hard working Aboriginal people of this state, money stolen so that their descendants could never aspire to accumulating assets or wealth to improve their lives, and your excuse, “we lost the records!” Lost the records indeed, this doesn’t stop your State Solicitors Office in finding enough information to undermine Aboriginal West Australians in their attempts to substantiate recognition of native title rights.

The appalling record of this Government unfortunately is not alone, Governments of every persuasion since Governor Hutt in the 1840’s have chosen to ignore, oppress and undermine any semblance of human rights being afforded to Aboriginal Western Australians. This must change, and it must change on your watch. You are the duly elected member, elected to enact laws and govern for the benefit of all West Australians. If you choose not to take action then we as the Aboriginal people of Western Australia can only assume that you are choosing to enact laws and govern for the benefit of the Settler Society.

I am an Aboriginal person, I am fortunate to have a level of education that allows me the ability to critically examine issues of importance to my people and our wonderful State and Nation. We are all in it together, we can not undo the wrongs of the past, but we each and every one of us are accountable for our actions today. What will be your legacy, handballing the Aboriginal Problem to future generations of West Australians or will you be recognised as the Parliament that made a decision to effect positive

change in the lives of Aboriginal people in Western Australia that allowed us as the First Peoples to live in harmony with the millions of Settler Peoples who now live on our lands.

I do not have access to vast reserves of cash like certain mining entrepreneurs, so I cannot influence your decisions with money, however in writing this letter I am appealing to your sense of common decency to stop the State sanctioned violence and abuse of Aboriginal people and take real action toward recognising the rights of Aboriginal West Australians, to live in peace (without fear of intimidation from the State), securely in decent homes and enjoy the ability to make decisions for our families in the knowledge that we can enjoy the same rights, privileges benefits that Settler Peoples are enjoying from the wealth of our traditional lands.

I look forward to witnessing some positive and dramatic change being effected by you in your role as a member of the Parliament of Western Australia that will go down in the annuals of history as the day that one State in Australia chose to stick its head up and make a difference for all of its citizens, the First Peoples and the Settler Peoples.

KADO MUIR

Leonora
Western Australia