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FAIR GO MATE AND UNAUSTRALIAN: AUSTRALIAN SOCIO-POLITICAL VENACULAR

In the age of the neo-conservative politics of John Howard's Federal coalition government the individual and family became responsible for welfare rather than the government. John Howard's Federal coalition government took a hard line approach to spending on welfare priorities and this marked an ideological shift from previous federal governments' universal policy of providing a safety net for all. Through an economical rationalist vein John Howard imposed unrealistic measures on the whole of the Australian society. This shift took away individual rights and it can be argued that the change to welfare provision impacted on Australian Aboriginal peoples autonomy. This paper will, exam the discourses of welfare and what it means to Australian Aboriginal people within the rhetoric of self determination, equality, human rights and equal justice in Australian law. As John Howard the Australian prime minister stated in 2006 "you get nothing for nothing."

At the present time in Australia and a year before a Federal election of 2007 each State and Territory in Australia is governed by the Labor Party, and the Liberal led coalition of the John Howard Government governs the Commonwealth of Australia. It is my contention that Aboriginal people are no better off under either of the political parties and that in the current political climate policies are based on paternalisms and discriminatory language. Both political parties have shifted public policy away from cultural heritage, land rights and right based discourses to demonising Aboriginal men and society. The political language has also shifted the public discourses away from equality to fiscal management and welfare stigma. All sides of the political philosophy are bipartisan in their approach to Aboriginal affairs in Australia.

UNSHACKLING THE CHAINS

In 1967, the Australian people voted in a landmark Federal election where a referendum was included in the ballot for the purposes of constitutional amendments to the Australian Constitution. Still today and at any other time in Australian history it was the biggest yes vote of 91% in a referendum (Sawer, 1988). The changes that the Australian people voted for were meant to end the discriminating and exclusionary practices of State and Federal Governments against Aboriginal people. Before 1967, the Australian Constitution within the special race powers provision read, section 51 sub section (xxv1).

“The people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws”, and section 127, “In reckoning the numbers of people in the Commonwealth, or State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.” (Sawer, 1988, pp. 48-66)

Basically what this meant was Aboriginal people had no rights, no citizen rights, no voting rights, no political representation, no rights to be treated fairly within the justice system and no rights of appeal against discriminative laws and decisions. The yes vote meant that the Commonwealth could design laws on the “basis for welfare policies related for Aboriginal people” by the Commonwealth (Sawer, 1988, p. 24). The constitution was amended by deleting Aboriginal race in section 57 and section 127 was also deleted from the constitution.

39 years later in 2006, Aboriginal people have the right to vote, pay taxes, can freely use medical services, are able to stand in unemployment lines and attend educational institutions. However this is where it stops, Aboriginal cultural heritage is being destroyed at ever increasing rates for development. Aboriginal languages are becoming extinct with the death of Elders who speak traditional languages, and there is no political representation with the demise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). In the current political climate in Australia there has been a devaluing of the administration of Aboriginal Affairs in most states of Australia. Aboriginal Affairs has become compartmental in large bureaucratic structures. In 2006, Queensland under the Labor State Government of Premier Beattie abolished the Department for Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and basically Queensland has no dedicated Minister for the portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. For the Australian Commonwealth, Aboriginal Affairs is located in the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

1990'S LIBERATION OR CON JOB

Authorship has mainly come from non-Aboriginal subjects/academics/“experts” with little insight into the internal dynamics of Aboriginal society. Aboriginal authorship has mainly focussed on cultural heritage and land rights (more recently native title). Further Aboriginal leaders in Charlie Perkins (1995) promoted rights based policy for Aboriginal people. More recently Noel Pearson (2000) with his rhetoric on “*Our Right to take Responsibility*” and getting out of the welfare cycle and Michael Mansell promotion of human rights and equal justice in the law for Aboriginal people. There are many more but these Aboriginal leaders have been major influences in public debates and major critics of government policy in regards to affecting change for Aboriginal people.

Michael Mansell and Noel Pearson in the 1990's after the successful Mabo court challenge for Native Title saw it as a victory for Aboriginal rights in all spheres of Australian judicial systems and the beginning of a new era. They saw it as the restoration of ‘Aboriginal sovereignty’ (Pearson, 1993, p. 14). It signalled a new phase to Australian official policy in regards to Aboriginal legal and cultural self-determination with the High Court decision of ‘Mabo’ and its recognition of Aboriginal customary law and property ownership. There was a renewed hope in Abo-

original Australian leading into the 21st century when the then Prime Minister Paul Keating (1992) of the Labor led Commonwealth Government said at Redfern in Sydney New South Wales, “we have to make peace with the Aboriginal people” (Keating, 1992). The Mabo High Court decision forced the Australian political system to devise laws for Aboriginal claims to country. It also saw Australian political institutions trying to come to terms with concepts of Aboriginality and Aboriginal rights, but continued to draft public policy and legislation that is discriminatory. Huge amounts of resources and effort was spent on what Aboriginal Australians call ‘extinguishment of rights’ policies and the public calls the ‘Aboriginal industry’.

Aboriginal Australians aspirations became squashed in 1996 with the change of the Commonwealth Government from Labor to the Liberal lead coalition of Howard. The Hon John Winston Howard was sworn in as Prime Minister of Australia on 11 March 1996. One of his first policy changes was to introduce ‘mutual obligation’ for people who were recipients of Government support from tax payer funds for unemployment benefits, single parent, sickness benefits and disability pensions. In 2005, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee (all appointed by Mr Howard and not elected by the people they are supposed to be representing) to the Coalition Prime Minister John Howard supported a shift in policy (Karvelas, 2005, p. 6). The result of this policy forces young Aboriginal people who live on traditional lands to leave their communities and move where there is work, or undertake training in large regional townships (Karvelas, 2005, p. 6). If these young people do not accept they are breached and their Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) income support is terminated. In Australia the unemployed youth receive Newstart and for Aboriginal Australians it is CDEP (Work for the dole- mutual obligation). This policy has had the effect of being seen as one based on segregation for Aboriginal communities where the majority of people are employed through this program and assimilation with moving the youth from their cultural supports into city enclaves. These systemic and orchestrated government public policies of abusing and demonising Aboriginal people as undeserving poor have occurred within the historical notion of charity.

The Howard Government also introduced changes to environmental and cultural heritage policies with the successful challenge to the World Heritage listing of Kakadu National Park stage III for uranium mining in 1997 at Jabiluka. These shifts in public policy attacked at the very heart of Aboriginal aspirations for sovereignty and self-determination and victimised Aboriginal people within the welfare discourses. Michael Mansell in 1989 saw the death of Land Rights for Aboriginal people in ‘the promises on land rights legislation have gone and it is my opinion that no more will we see land rights legislation in this country’ (Mansell, 1989).

Land Rights and Cultural Heritage is a corner stone of the Aboriginal political movement and the Howard government over a ten year period has slowly dismantled the major provisions for the Land Rights legislation. This was achieved in 2006 with changes to the *Commonwealth Land Rights Act 1976*. It is also my position that the Labor lead States also have slowly dismantled Land Rights legislation

when in 1992 the Goss Labor Government in Queensland eroded important provisions in the Queensland Land Rights legislation. This led to a huge Aboriginal rally demanding the main provisions be reinstated. The Commonwealth Government has also wound up the repatriation of cultural property, mainly skeletal remains from international collecting institutions to Aboriginal ownership. This saw the Federal Department of Communication Technology and the Arts bureaucratised the process by excluding Aboriginal participation and siding with large collecting institutions. Collecting institutions saw it as the death of scientific investigation once the material was handed back to Aboriginal people as inalienable property rights.

In this new political era of neo-conservatism Aboriginal interests for the environment, cultural material property and land clash with the interests of the State. The Commonwealth under John Howard is pursuing a developmentalist philosophy at all cost and maximisation of the bottom line with as little regulation by the Commonwealth to a corporatist model. This incorporates functions previously carried out by the Commonwealth to be transferred to private corporations. At the core of the current Commonwealth's approach to Aboriginal communities is Shared Responsibility Agreements, which are a contractual agreement between State, Territory or Federal Governments with an Aboriginal community. The agreement requires a level of onus on the Aboriginal community to meet the government's objectives for funding. These agreements, apply to many other service provisions of health, pollution levels, water quality monitoring, sanitation and welfare provisions. In many of these areas service provisions should be carried out as a public service, organised and controlled by public institutions of some kind not privately owned enterprises.

Aboriginal leaders who are moderates such as Noel Pearson and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee are calling for Aboriginal people to get out off the welfare cycle and become economically independent. These people have forgotten the historical subjugation and economic rape of Aboriginal nations by a dominant colonial force hell bent on relegating Aboriginal society as museum specimens to display and be marvelled at as a dead culture.

Australian government policies for Aboriginal people have played a key role in structuring the race relations that have developed since colonisation. They have been marked by the earlier attitudes of Christianity and official attitudes of doing good, then followed by official policies of 'closed reserves' and 'separate development' and in the twentieth century an attitude that is analogous to paternalism (Reynolds, 1996). This history was marked by official policies of 'assimilation' and 'integration' of mixed-bloods into Australian society (Reynolds, 1996). In the wake of what is called decolonisation late in the twentieth century official Australian policy focused on providing Aboriginal people a mechanism to take control of their lives and have a say in the future development of their communities. This was enhanced within the concepts of social justice and equal opportunity with Aboriginal demands that services which the Commonwealth government provides should be universally accessible to all Australians. There was a recognition that Aboriginal people had been for a long period of time shut out from equitable services and equal treatment within the Australian society.

The 1990's was a consolidation of advancement of Aboriginal rights and equality in Australian law most which arose out of legislative protection in the form of

the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cwth)*. Examples of these so-called rights are, the High Court's 3 June 1992, judgment on Native Title in the Mabo case, and self-determination which was a collective right rather than an individual right for Aboriginal communities. The 1990's also saw Australian Law recognise Aboriginal Customary Law within Commonwealth jurisdictions as a source of Law. The 1990's also saw the final report of Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody being presented to the Australian Federal Government. The report included 339 recommendations that provided a vehicle for Governments around Australia to include measures to reform their justice systems, reform their laws to address endemic disadvantages that Aboriginal people are facing. This saw a change to many Governments policies for education, housing, health and the criminal justice system. The 1990's also saw the establishment of the Social Justice Commission.

ABORIGINAL ASPIRATIONS SMASHED

Since 1971, there has been tension between liberalism and conservatism across the political divide over Aboriginal Land Rights, Self Determination, Self Government (Stokes, 1994, p. 10). The debates have evolved over 'ideological barricades' (Neill, 2002, pp. 6-7) that entrench ideas of 'black arm band approach to history' (Howard 2006) and denial of 'historical mistreatment', under funding of programs and 'racism' (Neill, 2002, pp. 6-7). John Howard's neo-conservative politics created a political climate where he forced his ideology of a democratic and monoculture Australian society. In doing this he opposed those views of a collectivist and pluralist Australian society. Thus thrusting social change on Aboriginal people (Howard 2006). We can read this into the raft of changes made to social policy for Aboriginal land rights, welfare reform, and the notion that rights are something people earn not given.

All the hard fought ground made by Aboriginal people and supporters up to the 1996 have now been eroded, such rights as equality, freedom and opportunity. The passing of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (cwth)* was meant to empower and provide social justice to Aboriginal people. The major principles of Social Justice are to develop a fairer, more prosperous and a more just society for all Australians. It is directed at expanding choices and opportunities for all Australians so that they are able to participate fully as Australian citizens in economic, social and political life and are better able to determine the direction of their own life (Social Justice Report, 2002).

The then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner in 1995 Michael Dodson stated,

the Governments long term objective is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have sufficient economic and social independence to enjoy to the full their right as Australian citizens and opportunities to participate in Australian society. (Dodson, 1995, p. 27)

Social Justice began for Aboriginal people in 1993 with the enactment of Federal Legislation for Social Justice Commission. This occurred through section 46B (1) of the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act (1986)*, “There is to be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, who is to be appointed by the Governor-General” (http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/hraeoca1986512/s46b.html). This was a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, that there is “a need for there to be an ongoing overall report on the exercise of basic human rights by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people” (Duffy, 1992, p. 1). It was an attempt by the Federal Government to acknowledge the extent of disadvantages suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Government to be actively involved in improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

All peoples have the rights to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural developments. (Article 1, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights)

Today the neo-conservatives’ ideologies of economic rationalism are ignominious in their embodiment of ‘conservative and paternalistic’ design to finding solutions to Aboriginal disadvantages (Stokes, 1994, p. 17).

RECONCILIATION

The white moderate who is more devoted to order than justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can’t agree with your methods.’ (Martin Luther King, 1963, BGGs-A13\JB\T:HEN\10HIST\I-HAVEADRM)

On December 2000, John Howard the Coalition Prime Minister of Australia delivered his address for the future of Reconciliation in Australia,

....past policies designed to assist have often failed to recognise the significance of Indigenous culture and resulted in the further marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the social, cultural and economic development of mainstream. This led to a culture of dependency and victim hood, which condemned many Indigenous Australians to lives of poverty and further devalued their culture in the eyes of their fellow Australians. (Howard, 2000, <http://australianpolitics.com/news/2000/00-05-27.shtml>)

At the core of John Howard speech was the notion of ‘fair go’ and that the Australian Government will be “guided in its policy deliberations by core Australian values. And the principle of equity and fair go, at the heart of the Australian character, is also at the heart of *practical reconciliation* programmes” (Howard, 2000, <http://australianpolitics.com/news/2000/00-05-27.shtml>). This ushered in a new

phrase for Reconciliation and defined as Practical Reconciliation. The corner stone to Practical Reconciliation is the key policy of Shared Responsibility Agreements.

Shared Responsibility Agreements are contractual agreements made between State, Territory or Federal Governments with an Aboriginal community. The agreement places a level of onus on an Aboriginal community to meet the government's objectives for funding. Basically an Aboriginal community states what its aims are for example, clean water, school, or youth programs. Shared Responsibility Agreements are designed as a control mechanism with discriminatory provisions of paternalism. In most cases these are legally binding on Aboriginal communities that have no other recourse but to accept Government provisions for funding. In most cases it is stand-over tactics in the context that Aboriginal communities are the most vulnerable, poverty stricken and victims of human rights abuses in Australian society and least able to afford to say no.

Such provision could be washing the faces of young children and funds would be given for a swimming pool. Another example all primary aged children must attend the local school and a petrol pump will be funded. Shared Responsibility Agreements can also be developed for social programs in exchange for goods or services they need in their community. For example air conditioners for a school or petrol pumps. These agreements also contain provisions for non-disclosure of details in the form of confidentiality clauses. This has affectively gagged Aboriginal communities, they are unable to speak out about provisions that they don't agree with, or raise criticisms about the Government or the agreement. Shared Responsibility Agreements now take the place of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) where the former ATSIC regional councils filled these roles (the council members were all elected by their community). Today, the Indigenous Co-ordination Councils (ICCs) who are bureaucrats from the Federal Office of Indigenous Affairs manage Shared Responsibility Agreements. Basically, these public servants who have little or no links to the community were simply employed too oversee the formation of Shared Responsibility Agreements, implementation and funding for the agreements.

Many current commentators have labelled Practical Reconciliation a complete failure and a move back to past paternalistic policy of Australian Governments. The Coalition however has promoted it in a positive language. For example, Senator Amanda Vanstone Minister for Federal Aboriginal Affairs defended Practical Reconciliation by stating that,

It's very paternalistic to say these people can't speak for themselves and tell us what they want... They may not speak bureaucratic language but they do know what the problems are, they do know what their solutions are. These agreements are a form of practical reconciliation. (Vanstone, 2005, www.reconciliation.org.au)

However, the detractors such as Aboriginal Senator Aden Ridgeway from the Democrats in the upper house (the Senate) has labelled these Shared Responsibility Agreements as,

The biggest disaster of them all. They are completely ad hoc, there are no benchmarks, there are no targets. How will these agreements- which are different every time you talk about them- result in improvements to the lives of Indigenous people across the country? (Ridgeway, 2005, www.democrats.org.au)

William (Bill) Jonas the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner went further when delivering a paper at the Moving Forward Conference at the University of New South Wales Sydney 15-16 August 2001.

The Government's failure to recognise the links between the past and the present is testament to the limitations of its 'practical reconciliation' approach. This is demonstrated by its response to the recommendations of the report relating to reparations. (Jonas, 2001, p. 3)

Shared Responsibility Agreements are being compared to past Queensland Protection Acts for Aboriginal people for example, "the agreements are reminiscent of the infamous Queensland Acts, which required that Aborigines on reserves kept the gates closed and love their children" (McCausland, 2005, <http://www.jumbunna.uts.edu.au>).

Michael Mansell has even gone further in saying that these agreements are in breach of *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* simply because these agreements are imposing a level of conditions that the rest of the Australian community are not subjected to. He even asserts that because of this racism the Shared Responsibility Agreements where consent has been given by Aboriginal communities are still unlawful. "Consent cannot make lawful that which is unlawful" (Pennells, 2004, page 1).

These Shared Responsibility Agreements are a social contract where by the Coalition Government of John Howard has procedural rights over Aboriginal communities and their regulations and control. These agreements provide governments with financial control and conditions dictated by Government over Aboriginal communities. With no regard for jurisprudential consequences. They are designed with one purpose in mind and that is to take away the rights of Aboriginal communities with no procedural fairness.

Finally the Australian Government has a duty of care to provide the same provision and level of services and entitlements to all Australians irrespective of where they live, what their religious background is, or what their skin colour is. It is a right all Australians citizens enjoy and expect. There is a minimal level of services that all Australians take for granted, such as clean water, a petrol pump, a swimming pool or air conditioning in their work place, or a high school in their community. Shared Responsibility Agreements are paternalistic and racist. These agreements are about division when they are only directed towards Aboriginal people. It is a fiduciary duty that all Australians expect of their Government so why are Aboriginal people treated differently within Australian law and society.

SELF DETERMINATION

At the moment the Australian Commonwealth Government is leading a forthright public debate against Aboriginal management of Aboriginal communities.

With the highly controversial sacking of the Mutitjulu Council Northern Territory mid 2006 and placing it under administration appointed by the Federal Office of Aboriginal Policy Coordination. The Mutitjulu Council and the Australian community were told that this was “the Australian government’s new approach to Aboriginal communities” (Graham, 2006, www.nit.com.au/news/story). The reason as we have been told but unsubstantiated is because of the rampant abuse of family violence, sexual abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, and crime. The appointment of an administrator by Government is meant to have the effect of improving conditions by taking control of financial management, and the administration of the Mutitjulu community to invest and direct resources. Further an ultimatum by the Federal Office of Aboriginal Policy Coordination demanding that the Mutitjulu Aboriginal community is to provide accommodation to Government workers (Graham, 2006). The Mutitjulu community has only “43 community houses with the approximately population of 400 people” and with most of these people either on welfare or work for the dole (Graham, 2006, www.nit.com.au/news/story). The Aboriginal people of this community live in extreme poverty and do not receive services that the rest of the Australian community take for granted. The community has also been threatened that if they speak out they will lose funding (Graham, 2006).

Since the election of the Howard Government in 1996 the coalition has publicised its self-management philosophy. The Government has been playing politics with public opinion with its numerous attacks on Aboriginal council’s accountability and authenticity of claims to cultural heritage (Neill, 2002, pp. 17-18). The authenticity of cultural heritage can be exemplified by the many struggles for protection of sacred places against development. These struggles often have contradictory consequences and are crucial questions in the context of contemporary struggles to reassert Aboriginal rights to ownership. In South Australia in 1993 a case was brought to the Federal court to stop the destruction of significant cultural heritage, it became known as the Hindmarsh Island case.

THE INTEGRITY OF ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGES

The major problem for Aboriginal peoples around the country is the inability of the political machinery to accept Aboriginal knowledges and beliefs. In Australian society Aboriginal people are demonised as drug abusers, as alcoholics, as perpetrators of domestic violence and welfare dependent. The very public nature of the debates also question authenticity and Aboriginal spiritual beliefs these debates attack at the very integrity of Aboriginal society and knowledges for cultural heritage.

Between, 1993-1996 public and Government debate raged unabated, in regard to the authenticity of Aboriginal claims to the cultural heritage of Hindmarsh Island in South Australia. “There were several Federal and High court challenges, a royal commission’ and a 25-year ban on development which was overturned, in favour of the development of a bridge linking Adelaide to Hindmarsh Island. It was reported widely that Aboriginal women fabricated the story in order to ‘stymie a pro-

posed development of the bridge” (Neill, 2002, pp. 20-21). However, in 1998 earth works for the construction of the bridge unearthed human remains at the location that the women indicated adding weight to their claims. The debacle also saw the new government of Howard dictate to State governments that they must amend their Aboriginal Heritage Laws to meet new Federal standards. Aboriginal cultural heritage laws changed around the country to meet the new standards as prescribed by the Federal Government. Aboriginal Australians see these new cultural heritage laws as development legislation rather than Cultural Heritage Protection laws. These new laws have very few heritage provisions and are mainly concerned with development procedures and administration by public servants.

In 1998 the Federal Government approved the development of an open cut mine for extraction of Zinc against the express wishes of the Gurdanji people (Traditional owners) of the Northern Territory. The owners of the mine want to divert the “McArthur River, to further exploit zinc deposits” at the mine (Bowling, 2003, <http://www.abc.net.au>). The Gurdanji people are concerned about loss of sacred sites and the impact on the environment with the diversion of the river. They are also concerned about contamination of hazard matter when flooding occurs flowing into the environment from the bond wall around the pit when the monsoons rains come. The owners of the mine have completed an environmental impact study and have delivered this to the Federal government and are now waiting final approval. The politics of development and jobs over Aboriginal cultural heritage, environment and social dislocation of Aboriginal people will win out. “The coalition Governments claims its role is to support and strengthen the central institutions and values of Australian” is ideologically and fundamentally opposed to any self-government or justice (Dodson, 1997, p. 11).

Across Australian no matter where Aboriginal people live Aboriginal disadvantage can be measured by life expectancy, poor socio-economics, lack of material prosperity, poor standards of health and incarceration rates. When viewing the statistics, it is fair to say that Aboriginal Australia is a community in crisis. However, one Aboriginal community has reversed this trend. The Aboriginal community of Utopia north east of Alice Springs has blended western frameworks with traditional frameworks to provide a better standard of living for the 1000 Aboriginal people living in several outstations. Most people live in traditional style houses, augment their diets with traditional foods, and use traditional medicines to meet their health care requirements. The community is self-managed and combines modern management styles with traditional methods based on Aboriginal law. The people of Utopia speak their language and still hold ceremonies to manage country and culture crime is low and substance abuse is very minimal. The “locals are about 70 per cent less likely to be hospitalised for heart problems and, unlike other Aboriginal communities, there has been no increase in obesity over the last 30 years.... has a mortality rate almost 40 per cent lower than the Northern Territory’s Indigenous average” (Richard, 2006, www.news.ninemsn.com.au).

Aboriginal Australia has long bemoaned that when true self-determination and positive outcomes are being achieved the Australian government de-funds services to the community. Utopia is one example that on all social indicators they are performing as a well-balanced community but the federal Government in its neo conservative economic rationalist approach has threatened to cut funding to key pro-

jects. The Howard Government threatened to take control of all service provisions to Utopia because the Utopian community is isolated and is a collective of '16 outstations'. The Howard Government also reasoned that Aboriginal communities were not economically viable and not sustainable. Howard questioned the economic viability of all Aboriginal outstations and Aboriginal self-management of Aboriginal communities. To justify de-funding programs to these communities the Howard Federal government openly in public forums demonised these communities by stating that "abuse and disease are rife in some communities" (Richard, 2006, www.news.ninemsn.com.au).

CONCLUSION

In Australia today neo conservative politics and ideology are stifling debate by using negative politics in the public domain. The coalition government of John Howard believes the Australian people gave him a mandate to change the social fabric of Aboriginal Australia by creating idealistic policies. These are viewed by Aboriginal people as similar to past paternalistic policies of assimilation and integration into a White Australia based on a single mindedness of suppression. The bipartisan politics of Australian political parties can be marked by bullying and stand over tactics by withdrawing economic assistance from Aboriginal communities and people for acceptance of public policies aimed at destroying Aboriginal aspiration for sovereignty.

The policies are designed to attack the very fabric of the cultural patterning of Aboriginal people today. It is a tide that is orchestrated to wash away knowledge of traditional law and observance of traditional customs and practice that is ignominious in the normalising of Aboriginal people as criminals, welfare dependant, drunks and corrupt. Finally the democratically elected governments of Australia at the state and federal level are morally bankrupt with their media savvy projection of Aboriginality. This political savvy limits public scrutiny of half-truths told and unable to be interrogated by the realities of disadvantageous, and the prostitution of all things Aboriginal by political progressivist ideologuery.

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