

NATIVE RESERVE — GOOMALLING

Statement

HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.10 pm]: We are 10 minutes ahead of schedule, are we not?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

Hon Sue Ellery: Does that cause you consternation?

Hon COL HOLT: It does, actually, because I would like to read a letter on behalf of a lady who sent it to me and she cannot be in the chamber, but she will come online to watch it. I will proceed anyway.

Hon Peter Collier: We can get her a copy.

Hon COL HOLT: Yes, we will do that; that is okay.

People would know my home town is Goomalling and in the past I have done some project work there, most recently with the local Goomalling Noongars around preserving the native reserve, as it is called, on the edge of the Goomalling town site, which was the home of many Aboriginal people in the 1960s and 1970s. It was crown land and then it was vested in the Shire of Goomalling. The shire decided it would develop it as a light industrial area and when the local Aboriginal people found out, they worked together with the shire to preserve the native reserve for all Aboriginal people and the community of Goomalling into the future. It was through that process that I met a lady named Tracey de Grussa and since that time she has requested that I read out a letter to Parliament, which I seek the indulgence of the house to do now. It reads —

Dear Hon. Colin Holt MLC

I write this letter in desperation that something will change today for the betterment of my people.

I am an aboriginal woman, a 52yr old Ballardong noongar woman.

Over the years our young aboriginal people have been struggling to find their place in our society. They have become lost. From birth they have so much to overcome.

I believe only the ‘culturally strong’ grow up to be proud & productive in life.

By ‘culturally proud’ I mean having the guidance of our ELDERS, teaching us of the importance to be proud of who we are.

Our ELDERS have all the wisdom and cultural strongness young aboriginal people need in their life to make them feel worthwhile.

The young ones, who do not get the support of their ELDERS for what ever reason, that may be (no surviving elders for instance) and/or are born into a dysfunctional family life ie; domestic violence, physical/sexual/mental/drug abuse, become very angry. That anger eventually turns to hopelessness if not treated properly. A lot of our young are being raised by single mothers or grandmothers, these mothers and grandmothers do their utmost best that they can with the little they have.

Remember the saying—‘It takes a village to raise a child’!

All children have the right and deserve to be loved and appreciated, they need family and more importantly the guidance of ELDERS in their lives.

In Aboriginal culture we have ‘men’s business’ and ‘women’s business’!

Young boys/men will not talk to women about any issues they may have (other than their mother/nanna at times,family men is who they need in their lives) and vice versa. Talking about what may be bothering them to a non aboriginal man/woman is virtually impossible, no matter how qualified in the ‘white’ world they may be.

A full and true understanding of aboriginal culture is what is needed to make any progress in helping our young people. This will not be found in a university text book.

Our young people become lost, because the colour of their skin becomes a hindrance, in their eyes, to them as they get older in life.

They face racism on a daily basis. They would love to be a valued member of society and all the while being a proud aboriginal person. But it becomes all ‘too hard’ for them to be proud and productive when they meet people, who see the colour of their skin before they see the beautiful person, in front of them.

Too many non aboriginal people paint all aboriginal people with the same brush because of a few bad eggs. There are bad eggs in every race!

The aboriginal person on the other hand, takes people from all walks of life how they find them. We do not pre-judge anyone. If you become a friend of an aboriginal person you will have a friend for life.

In May this year 2016, ABC TV aired 'Lost Between Two Worlds' (by Stephanie Zillman) There are 5 beautiful ELDERS who featured. They spoke of their despair and heartache with regard to their young, killing themselves and what they would like to see happen.

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I ask you to have a long look into the eyes of these 5 ELDERS, you will see sadness, pain, anger, despair, heartache and desolation.

IN MY OWN WORDS

I believe only our people, the 'ELDERS' can truly heal our young, with help from the appropriate agencies and caregivers.

I strongly believe that the non aboriginal community can not/will not make any progress in helping heal/bridge the division between aboriginal and non aboriginal Australia until they fully learn and understand our culture.

We aboriginal people have survived on this land for over 40 000 years, so we must have done things right.

If our young continue to kill themselves at the rate it is today, there will not be an aboriginal race 400yrs from today (so to speak)

Things have got to change!

We aboriginal people need everyone to start listening to us!

Since 1788 we have been told 'what to do', 'when to do it', 'how to do it', 'how to live', 'how not to live'. We've been stripped of who we're really' are!

Governments cannot continue to push your European ways etc onto us and believe you know what we need, what is best for us or what is in our best interest etc!

You have tried for 228 yrs and failed badly.

Its time to listen to our ELDERS!

I plead that the first thing, the appropriate agencies including government departments do, is to come out to our communities and sit down with our ELDERS. Ask them what they would like YOU to do, to help them, then take it from there.

Give our ELDERS all the support they need in every way possible. Follow their lead!

Until non aboriginal Australia truly understands our culture and its structure our young people will continue to be/get lost. We aboriginal people can have the best of both worlds with the help of true understanding. To get true understanding start talking with my mob face to face, we won't bite! I believe only then will we see things change for the better.

WE CANNOT BE SOMEONE WE ARE NOT!

In finishing..

Please do not put together another advisory committee made up of people with 1 or 3 or 5 university degrees. This does not work, we know its a total waste of taxpayers money, that should be spent making a REAL difference to the people who REALLY need it.

Kind regards

Tracey de Grussa

Ballidu

I seek leave to table an extract from *Lost between two worlds* by Stephanie Zillman and the pictures of the five elders.

Leave granted. [See paper 4425.]

House adjourned at 6.18 pm

