

their own people, and others, for healthy early childhood development; education for life long learning, and education for healing.

Such educational packages would be both community based and tertiary delivered. They would have formal accreditation so that graduates could work in any field that helps build a society where children will always feel and be safe. This approach is an Indigenous employment strategy, and I would build that into my government's employment and enterprise strategies.

A long term approach embedded in education and quality research

In the longer term, if I were the prime minister, I would embed in all that I do, research on the ground. Those researchers undertaking professional doctorates, with scholarships for Indigenous Australians, would work with those working on the ground, and would document the activities and processes, so that in five or ten years time, I could show the Australian nation what works, why it works, and how it would work in the towns and regions of Everywhere.

I would expect then that we would be able to work together, all of us, to build a future for all people in this country. I would then be able to say to my senior bureaucrats: you now have the practice based evidence. Support these approaches, on behalf of all Australians. But I am not the prime minister. And I am sorry that I am not, for if I were this prime minister, I would ask of myself: am I now willing to say *sorry* for my government's inability to respond to this *long term* "emergency," an emergency that has existed over the ten years that I have been prime minister of this country? Am I willing to say sorry on behalf of my ministers, who have known of this crisis for many years, for their lack of will to do their jobs? Their inaction has profoundly deepened this so-called emergency. If I were the Prime Minister I would sit in deep soul searching about my lack of leadership in response to these critical needs, and I would acknowledge that in my mandate on behalf of all Australians, I have failed Aboriginal children today. And I would say... **Sorry**.

Life in Utopia

By Simon Quilty

Norman is the ambulance driver and general handyman for the health clinic in Utopia. He drives the troop carrier ambulance, changes the tyres and fan belts when it's needed, and can fix most things. I met him and became good friends when I was working as a locum Doctor in Central Australia earlier this year.

He and his wife and their growing family - four children under five years old, and two teenage daughters - live in a tin hut across from the doctor's three-bedroom house, and were my neighbours while I was working there.

Norman's home is constructed of corrugated iron on a concrete slab. It was the original doctors' house built over thirty years ago when white medicine first arrived. It's a single room about 6 meters long and three meters wide. The inside is dirty, from years of wear and the desert sand that finds its way into everything.

There's a single tap, and a single power point running two fridges, and an air conditioner that has been roughly cut through the wall. In the heat of summer when the temperature goes above 50, the family close all the doors and turn the air conditioner up, but it's still bloody hot in that little space with eight people packed in like sardines.

There are a few live wires poking out of a piece of PVC tube protruding from one of the walls and Norman has wrapped them up in plastic tape. He was told that an electrician and a plumber were on their way to fix all of these problems over two years ago, but still nothing has been done. He worries that little inquisitive fingers will explore the blue plastic tape, and yells at the kids if he finds them playing with it.

I spoke to Norman recently. I pushed hard for the construction of a new house for his family over six months ago when I was working with him, and was told that the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Affairs had listed this as a priority.

Norman told me that although he had been promised one earlier this year, nothing has yet come and that there is no longer any talk of a new house. He's not disappointed, he just resigns too easily to the reality of the situation - the only thing that an aboriginal man can do. And he says his house is not dissimilar from the way all the other blackfellas live out in this country. At least he's got a paid job.

Whilst every politician is howling hysterically about child sexual abuse, the only fundamental change that Brough has introduced is the incredible disempowerment of aboriginal people.

Aboriginal men have been labeled as pedophiles. Parents have been labeled as neglectful. Land rights have been forcefully removed.

What will extra policing bring except more black men in prison? What will the army be able to achieve in a 12-month stint? It's not even a start in the right direction. You don't empower people by firstly disempowering them.

When I spoke to Norman recently, I asked him how the army had been received when they visited Utopia a few months back. Norman recounted how all the old people listened to the man in the khaki suit, a very similar outfit to the local police, interested in what he was saying about their children's health and welfare. When it came to the point about land requisition however there was outrage.

The true agenda of Mr. Howard's profoundly racist agenda is clear to the people of Utopia. When I spoke to Norman, I was at first taken aback by his casual analysis of what is happening. But they've all seen it before and are powerless to prevent what most see as nothing but a land grab - it's just another chapter in the white mans invasion.

Memories from the Dark Side

By Barbara Rogalla

Barbara Rogalla has been a member of DCI for seven years, since she first publicly condemned the open-ended and mandatory detention of child refugee applicants. She has recently completed her PhD at RMIT University in Melbourne. Barbara is now seeking to further engage with debating the influence of political process on the law and public policy.

There seems to be a "dark side" to the generous side of protection. It becomes apparent when a government decides that a person does not belong. Then, the element of protection degenerates into a display of vicious persecution.

Just ask Tony Tran, a refugee who was locked up in an immigration detention centre for more than five years even though he had a valid visa and was lawfully in Australia. After Tony was locked up without cause or due process in 1999, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (since January 2007 euphemistically called the Department of Immigration and Citizenship) put his son into state care and even changed the child's name to make it easier to send the boy to South Korea. These actions are deliberate and go beyond the "bureaucratic bungling" that served as departmental excuses to explain the detention of Cornelia Rau and the deportation of Vivian Alvarez. Yet the detention of neither these women nor of Tony Tran or the two hundred other people, who were also inappropriately detained under immigration law, is officially deemed "illegal".

This article takes us to the dark side of protection and winds back the calendar to the beginning of the 21st century, to a time of lies and half-truths peddled at the highest level of government: the time of the un-thrown children and the Khaki election in November 2001 when a documented human need of refugees was cleverly framed as a national emergency and a threat to Australia's sovereignty. It was a time of assurances that locking up refugee