

Submission
No 5

INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

Organisation:

Name: Mr Melrose Desmond Donley

Telephone:

Date received: 26/11/2007

To the:

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Closing the Gap

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

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RECEIVED

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23 November 2007

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney
NSW 2000

To whom it may concern,

I am an Australian citizen, born out of wedlock in 1914. I have been through two world wars and the Great Depression.

I was kidnapped off my mother at the age of six months, and placed in the care of the Queensland Government until the age of eighteen years, never to know anything about my father or my mother.

I did not discover anything about my heritage or background until after I learnt about the Freedom of Information Act when I was in my sixties. I discovered my mother was Aboriginal and my father was white. Because of my fair skin I did not know about my Aboriginality until then.

I became a Ward of State, placed in institutions, and only given a primary education. At the age of fourteen years I was sent to work on a slave farm, hired out to a Mr [REDACTED], Queensland, on the 25th of February 1930.

During my life there has been personal information kept from me. For example, when I was working on the farm, I was never told what my wages were, what hours I had to work, or where my wages were paid into. I never received a bank book or a statement from the bank, and never received a penny of my wages.

The hours I worked were from 03:30am till 09:00pm, or sometimes 10:00pm, 365 days a year, with no time off. I never saw an inspector the whole time I was under State care.

Being on a dairy farm, with sixty-odd cows to milk, those were the hours I was compelled to work. During the day, between milking, I did a man's job ploughing, and general work in the boiling sun. I had to do the milking twice a day, as well as

feed the animals, and wash up and scour the dairy utensils after the evening meal. I slept by myself in a draughty shed. I had to hang my clothes on a nail, and sleep on an old iron bedstead which sagged in the middle, with a chaff bag for a mattress and a sugar bag filled with saw material for a pillow.

Years later I discovered my wages, which were supposed to be paid into a Trust Fund, were 6/- a week for the first year, 8/- a week for the second year, 10/- a week for the next year, and 15/- a week for the final year. I have not received a penny.

To date, I have bumped up against the greatest bureaucracy the world has seen, when a government can make a slave out of you, steal your wages, and bar you access to court to get justice.

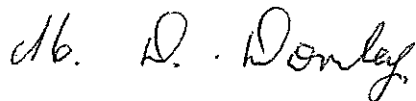
If I went into a supermarket and stole articles for a lousy sum, I would be arrested, tried and perhaps given a jail sentence. Not so the Government when it stole my wages.

To illustrate my point, there was an elderly Aboriginal woman in Toowoomba, Queensland, who landed in court on some misdemeanour. She was given a jail term and was not allowed to go home to get her medication. She died in jail. That is what is called Democracy.

Throughout the years I developed stomach ulcers and diabetes due to bad diet and stress. I do know that diabetes is quite high in Aboriginal people. However, the incidence is highest among those on a western diet, and those living among the general population.

I do hope my story, comments, and submission to your Committee are helpful and provide an insight into an unusual Aboriginal male life.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melrose D. Donley".

Melrose Desmond Donley