



M E D I A R E L E A S E

Howard's plan is another 'Children overboard'

The Northern Territory's peak Aboriginal health body has called the Prime Minister's plan to give sexual health checks to all Aboriginal children in the NT a "racist, divisive and illegal" act that would alienate people throughout the Territory and cause great social resistance.

AMSANT EO, John Paterson, says it's ironic that Aboriginal people had been pleading for more doctors, nurses and specialists for decades to address issues of poor health, alcoholism and sexual abuse—with no response from the Federal Government.

"But now in an election year, the Prime Minister has somehow managed to find hundreds of GPs to make sensitive and intrusive sexual checks on our young people," Mr Paterson says.

"But there's been no consultation; no briefings for Aboriginal people; no question of tackling these problems together in partnership. Aboriginal health services have the cultural awareness, linguistic skills and clinical excellence to carry out general health checks but we have been consistently compromised, over many years, by insufficient resources and funding."

Mr Paterson says compulsory sexual health checks are offensive and racist and would be totally unacceptable to non-Aboriginal mums and dads anywhere in Australia.

"These new federal police are going to have their hands full trying to force Aboriginal kids and young adults into the clinic for anal and vaginal health checks," he says. "Sexual abuse occurs throughout Australia—not just in Aboriginal communities—so why is Mr Howard stigmatising our people so cynically?"

Mr Paterson says that just days after the 40th anniversary of the Referendum on Aboriginal rights, Mr Howard was now taking back those rights in a politically-motivated move, before the election.

He says that AMSANT urges all its partners and all allies of Aboriginal people—like the AMA and the Defence Forces—to refuse to negotiate with the Federal Government on these issues until Aboriginal organisations and individuals are actively engaged in the design, delivery and assessment of any solutions.

Mr Paterson said AMSANT was disgusted and stunned that Kevin Rudd had so easily accepted Mr Howard's "jack-boot tactics", without any consultation with Aboriginal people.

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Interviews/information: John Paterson AMSANT EO 0418.904.727
 Peter Bonner AMSANT Media 0407.000.592