

Tuesday, 6 May 2014

1120. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

In relation to an application to the Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme Western Australia by Ms Helen Clifton, which was denied, and subsequent requests for re-consideration, which were also denied, I ask:

(a) does the Minister accept that Ms Clifton's wages, for work she did on Bedford Station between the years 1955 and 1974, were withheld by station managers and that this was as a direct result of the Government policies and laws of the day:

(i) if no to (a), why not; and

(ii) if yes to (a), does the Minister agree that Ms Clifton should have a reasonable expectation of Government reparation:

(A) if no to (a)(ii), why not; and

(b) does the Minister accept that because of the hours spent working on the station in exchange for rations, Ms Clifton was denied a basic education and that this has had a profound affect on the rest of her life:

(i) if no to (b), why not; and

(ii) if yes to (b), does the Minister think this was fair;

(c) were there any non-Aboriginal people working for rations only during the same years of 1955 to 1974;

(d) will the Minister apologise to Ms Clifton and others in similar circumstances for the policy of the Government of the day, which made it lawful for station managers to use Aboriginal people's labour in exchange for rations only and in conditions that were inferior to those enjoyed by non-Aboriginal workers:

(i) if no to (d), why not; and

(e) will the Minister institute a new scheme to address the experiences of people who worked on stations and whose wages were withheld:

(i) if no to (e), why not?

(a) No.

(i) The Stolen Wages Taskforce found that station workers' incomes were not controlled directly by Government and consequently fall outside the scope of the Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme. It should be noted that application to the Scheme does not affect the legal rights of any applicant that may choose to pursue other courses of action.

(ii) Not applicable.

(A) Not applicable.

(b) – (d) These issues are outside the scope of the Stolen Wages Taskforce's inquiry therefore I am unable to comment.

(e) No.

(i) The State Government invests heavily in measures to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people. These investments are, to a large degree, based on recognition that the disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal people is a result of discriminatory legislation and policy that existed during the period 1905 to 1972.

