Media Release: Ice in Remote Communities


Professor Maria Langton claims in the October 25 issue of the Weekend Australian that the drug ice is becoming widespread in remote communities. This is a far fetched claim, made without any supporting evidence. Langton does not know remote communities today, she does not speak the languages of any of the remote communities, she does not understand their problems and she does not know their ground condition. She cannot name a single community where the abuse of methamphetamine is becoming widespread because there are none. In fact she is stereotyping all Aboriginal remote communities in a desperate attempt to build support for the ill considered and sketchy recommendations of the Forrest inquiry she help to run. Stirring up moral panic in this way for headlines is irresponsible – the situation of the Aboriginal bush is too seriously disadvantaged for these kinds of publicity games.

I challenge Marcia Langton today to name a single community where ice is widely used. I challenge her to front up at any community and repeat the claims. To come and explain herself and present the evidence. Is she talking about Cape York? No ice epidemic there. About the western desert? No epidemic there. Or maybe she means Arnhem Land, where she parades in the safe enclave of the Garma festival every year among white crowds? I have just spent a long time in Arnhem Land, on the ground, in communities. Again, no ice.

We in the bush have always had Langton figures trying to police us and speak for us and claim to know us, and represent us to the wider Australia, and use that position for their own ends. Well, enough is enough. Outrageous libels against indigenous communities have been used in the past to justify sweeping legislative changes – so it is again today. Professor Langton wrings her hands and pretends to be concerned about the well-being of the bush. The bush would be in a much better state if she and her kind left us alone to run our own affairs.

There is in fact a pervasive crisis of bush drug abuse, but the drug being abused is marijuana, and that marijuana was introduced to our communities in the 1970s by mainstream outsiders. Local indigenous leaders have been dealing at the local level with our social problems and endeavouring to enlist the help of concerned medical experts and government agencies. This is a difficult task in the Northern Territory, where the government presently in power is deeply hostile to Aboriginal interests. We once again appeal to the Prime Minister, who wishes to be the first Prime Minister for indigenous affairs, and we say: get rid of your useless cabal of advisers and consult with Aboriginal people in remote communities themselves.