CONSULTING WITH WHOM?

Gerry Wood, Independent Member for Nelson, says that the Chief Minister’s rejection of his request to send the abortion Bill to a Parliamentary Committee shows he doesn’t understand what is going on. His accusation that I want to kill the Bill is silly as he knows that even if the Bill is delayed it will eventually be debated and voted on.

Gerry says that the excuse for not sending this Bill to a committee is that the Government has consulted – this is only half the story. The real story is that some members of his own party (Including six members of the pro-abortion group Emily’s List) want this rushed through to avoid proper scrutiny. He is being pushed along.

Whilst those in the cities may have been asked for their views on this important issue, Aboriginal people certainly have not.

There was not one mention of the word Aboriginal in the Department of Health’s discussion paper.

Gerry says he was informed only yesterday that there has been no consultation with the Tiwi women, the home of Sister Anne Gardiner, the Senior Australian of the Year. Remember her speech which said you must consult with Aboriginal people.

That is why you need a committee to go out to communities like on the Tiwi islands and ask them about what is being proposed. I bet you they aren’t the only other community not consulted.

The Government has not explained to people in these communities, all they have done is asked for comment from AMSANT (Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT) who don’t speak for Aboriginal people just Aboriginal Health Services.

A committee can also question the people who put this Bill to Parliament and about the submissions that came from the discussion paper. This means that the Bill is properly tested by people qualified in this important area.

The sad thing is that the Government has shown it has no problem in breaking its election promise of Opening Parliament to the People.
Its own Select Committee recommended the following: *The Committee proposes that referral of Bills to a committee be the norm. They will strengthen the Assembly’s ability to have conversations with the people it represents and to give detailed consideration to vital public issues.*

This is a vital public issue but one the Government doesn’t want to be scrutinised under its own policy.