

DARWIN PRESS CLUB SPEECH...

THANKS FOR INVITING ME....

..AND A SPECIAL THANKS TO SID STIRLING FOR HIS RESTRAINED AND DIGNIFIED WELCOME ..

IT'S A RARE HONOR, INDEED, TO HAVE A POLITICIAN OF HIS STATURE ..

(FOR WHO COULD DOUBT HIS STATURE.. ??)

..EXERCISE HIS PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE TO SUCH EFFECT ..IN THE NOBLE CAUSE OF ENDING THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ABUSE OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN..

NO DOUBT HIS OWN CHILDREN WILL BE PROUD, IN YEARS TO COME, WHEN THEY PULL THAT HANSARD FROM THE FAMILY BOOKSHELVES AND NOTE FOR THEMSELVES ...NOT ONLY THE BRILLIANCE OF HIS RHETORIC.. BUT THE ROLE HE PLAYED.

I KNOW YOU DO THINGS A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY UP HERE..IN KEEPING WITH LONG TRADITION ..

AND SO I'VE BEEN AMUSED TO CARRY WITH ME THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE THOUGHTS OF CHAIRMAN SID... LIKE METAPHORICAL KEY TO THE CITY ... AS I'VE DONE THE SIGHTS OF DARWIN WITH MY OWN CHILDREN..

I BROUGHT MY THREE SONS UP HERE ... AND ALL THEY WANTED TO SEE WERE THE REPTILES..

SO, WE WENT OUT TO THE CROC FARM... AND THEN
OUT ON THE RIVER TO SEE THE JUMPING CROCS ..

AND WHILE I WAS WATCHING THEM I RECALLED
THAT ONE OF MY COLLEAGUES..

..AN OLD DARWIN HAND HIMSELF..

HAD TOLD ME THAT COMING HERE ..REPRESENTING
"LATELINE"... IN THE RATHER HEIGHTENED
ATMOSPHERE CREATED BY RECENT REVELATIONS
ABOUT THE CHIEF MINISTER.. AND WHAT SHE
KNEW.. AND WHEN SHE KNEW IT ...

...WOULD BE A BIT LIKE TAKING A DIP IN THE
ADELAIDE RIVER...

WELL.. NOW THAT I'VE BEEN TO THE RIVER... I
KNOW WHAT HE MEANT....

BUT HERE I AM....NONETHELESS..

AND IF THERE ARE ANY HUNGRY CROCS OUT
THERE IN THE AUDIENCE.. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO
STAY PATIENT.

YOU CAN JUST KEEP FLOATING AROUND WITH
YOUR BEADY EYES JUST ABOVE THE SURFACE...
AND YOU CAN LIE IN WAIT...

I'LL BE FINISHED SOON..

DON'T GET ME WRONG I KNOW THERE ARE SOME
FINE SCRIBBLERS OUT THERE... SOME GREAT
BROADCASTERS TOO..

AND ... WHERE IT COINCIDES WITH MY THEME TONIGHT... I'LL MAKE REFERENCE TO SOME OF YOUR WORK...FROM WHICH I CAN TELL WE DO HAVE SOME FRIENDS AMONGST YOU.. THAT'S GOOD..BECAUSE I WAS A BIT UNCERTAIN ABOUT DOING THIS..

BUT, I THOUGHT, IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD..

AFTER ALL IT'S NOT AS IF I PLANNING TO DIP MY TOE INTO THE MURKY WATERS OF YOUR PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

YOU'D HAVE TO BE **STEVE IRWIN** RE-INCARNATED TO TAKE THAT RISK..

BUT I'LL PAUSE HERE, LEST I WAKE UP TO THE HEADLINE:

"LATELINE PRESENTER COMPARES N-T PARLIAMENT TO CROC FARM" ..

NO, NO... NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM MY THOUGHTS..

I'VE GOT FAR TOO MUCH RESPECT FOR CROCODILES!!

NOW... IN ONE VERY RECENT SESSION OF THAT PARLIAMENT THE CHIEF MINISTER..

ANOTHER ABC PRESENTER GONE TO THE DARK SIDE..

MADE A SERIES OF ALLEGATIONS ABOUT "LATELINE'S" REPORTING OF VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ABUSE OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND

CHILDRENLIVING IN THE TERRITORY.. UNDER HER JURISDICTION...

THE CHIEF MINISTER SUGGESTED THAT WE HAD ENGAGED IN A CONSPIRACY TO “JUSTIFY” STATEMENTS MADE BY THE FEDERAL MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS, MAL BROUGH ...THAT THERE ARE PAEDOPHILE RINGS OPERATING IN REMOTE COMUNITIES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

SHE REFERRED TO OUR MUTIJULU REPORT AS ‘DISGRACEFUL’ , SHE CLAIMED IT WAS “A SET – UP” THAT HAD “SUBSTANTIALLY DAMAGED” LATELINE’S REPUTATION.

SHE FOLLOWED THAT UP WITH A STATELINE INTERVIEW DESCRIBING THE SAME REPORT AS “EXTRORDINARILY MISLEADING”.. AND “DISTORTED”..

I WILL ANSWER THOSE ALLEGATIONS IN A MOMENT..

BUT THE CHIEF MINISTER WENT FURTHER, ACCORDING TO HER, MY INTERVIEW WITH THE CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN CROWN PROSECUTOR NANETTE ROGERS, WAS ALSO “MISLEADING”.

... MISLEADING.. SHE SAID BECAUSE IT LEFT THE TALKBACK RADIO HOST JOHN LAWS WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT NONE OF THE CASES NANETTE ROGERS CITED HAD BEEN PROSECUTED IN COURT.

WHILE I APPRECIATE THE CHIEF MIINISTER’S DEEP RESPECT FOR JOHN LAWS..

(SHE SAYS: "HE'S A SMART MAN"....AND I'VE NO REASON TO DOUBT IT.)

HIS COMPREHENSION CLEARLY FAILED HIM ON THIS POINT..

THE INTERVIEW WAS WITH THE CROWN PROSECUTOR TALKING FOR THE MOST PART ABOUT CASES SHE HAD PROSECUTED... IN COURT.

BUT LET'S PUT MR LAW'S INCOMPREHENSION ASIDE.

IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE HEARD THE NANETTE ROGERS INTERVIEW DESCRIBED AS "MISLEADING"..

TO MY MIND IT WAS A PASSIONATE RECITATION OF A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS CATALOG OF HORRORS PERPETRATED AGAINST ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA...

IT WAS ABOUT PAEDOPHILIA AND INCEST AND RAPE AND MURDER.. AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE ...EVEN AGAINST BABIES.

ACTS OF SAVAGERY BY YOUNG PETROL SNIFFERS AND DRUNKS .. MADE POSSIBLE BY ALCOHOLIC NEGLECT.

IF SOMEONE WANTED EVIDENCE OF PAEDOPHILIA IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA.. IT WAS ALL THERE, IN CASES.. LAID OUT BY NANETTE ROGERS.

AND SHE WAS DRIVEN TO SPEAK OUT... I KNOW.. BY HER ABSOLUTE DISMAY AT AN ONGOING CULTURE OF VIOLENCE THAT SHOULD MAKE THE MOST APATHETIC.. THE MOST PASSIVE ..THE MOST DISENGAGED OF VIEWERS REEL WITH SHOCK AND INDIGNATION.

AND SO.. WE POSE WITH OUR REPORTING.. THE
FUNDEMENTAL QUESTION:

HOW COULD THIS BE ALLOWED TO GO ON ...AND
ON.... AND ON.. IN THIS RICH AND ENLIGHTENED
COUNTRY..IN THIS AGE OF AFFLUENCE... AND FOR
IT NOT TO BE REGARDED AS A NATIONAL
EMERGENCY?

YOU POLITICIANS OUT THERE CAN SAY WHAT YOU
LIKE ABOUT US. WE ARE MERELY JOURNALISTS
AFTER ALL..

AND LONG TRADITION TELLS US THAT
MESSENGERS SHOULD BE READY TO BE SHOT!

BUT I TELL YOU ..WE AT "LATELINE" ARE NOT THE
STORY. THIS IS, OVERWHELMINGLY, ABOUT THE
CHILDREN AND HOW TO SAVE THEM!

NOW, THOSE JOURNALISTS WHO WOULD MAKE US
THE STORY, LOST IN THEIR LABYRINTHINE
CONSPIRACY THEORIES, THEIR SENSES LONG
DULLED BY A DESPERATE NEED TO PROVE THEIR
OWN OUTRAGEOUS CLAIMS AND THEIR
OBJECTIVITY FENCED IN BY POLITICAL
ALLEGIANCES HAVE, I BELIEVE, FORGOTTEN THOSE
CHILDREN.

BUT DESPITE THE FACT THAT WE ARE **NOT** THE
STORY, I CANNOT IN GOOD CONSCIENCE, LEAVE
UNANSWERED HERE, BEFORE AN ASSEMBLY OF
JOURNALISTS, THE ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST
US BY THE CHIEF MINISTER.

AND SINCE SHE IS, PERHAPS PAINFULLY, AWARE OF THE MEMO FORM.

THIS IS MY MEMO...

TO: THE CHIEF MINISTER.
FROM: TONY JONES.

RE: YOUR ALLEGATIONS.

(..AND SINCE I'M HERE TO READ IT OUT, IT NEED NOT BE ACCESSED UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT...)

CHIEF MINISTER. I REFER TO YOUR CLAIMS THAT LATELINE'S REPORT ON MUTIJULU WAS "MISLEADING".. ETC.. ETC..

MAY I REFER YOU TO YOUR OWN MUTIJULU MEMO DATED 26 NOVEMBER, 2004 WHICH READS IN PART:

"SOCIAL DYSFUNCTION SURROUNDING THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE EPIDEMIC IS RESULTING IN SIGNIFICANT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES - SELF HARM, VIOLENCE AGAINST OTHERS, SEXUAL ABUSE AND CHILD NEGLECT. CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS FIVE HAVE CONTRACTED STDS AND YOUNG GIRLS ARE BEING PROSTITUTED FOR PETROL. TWO-THIRDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN ARE MALNOURISHED AND UNDERDEVELOPED".

CHIEF MINISTER .. THAT WAS, PRETTY MUCH, WHAT WAS SAID IN OUR STORY...WITH ONE MAJOR EXCEPTION..

..WE ALSO REPORTED THAT A PAEDOPHILE HAD BEEN OPERATING IN THE COMMUNITY, UNCHECKED BY BOTH WHITE AND BLACK AUTHORITIES.

ON THE ABC'S N-T "STATELINE" PROGRAM, BROADCAST ON OCTOBER 13 YOU SAID OF THE MUTIJULU REPORT:

"... THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS ISSUE FOR THE ABC! DISTORTED A LOT OF FACTS, SPOKE TO A TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL WOMAN WHO HADN'T LIVED IN THAT COMMUNITY FOR SEVEN YEARS, SPOKE TO A DOCTOR WHO HADN'T BEEN THERE FOR FOUR YEARS, AND REPRESENTED THESE ISSUES AS CURRENT ONES FOR THE COMMUNITY.

CHIEF MINISTER, THAT TRADITIONAL WOMAN IS CALLED MANTAJARRA WILSON AND I CAN TELL YOU A FEW THINGS ABOUT HER, WHICH MAY SURPRISE YOU.

SHE HAS A LONG AND ABIDING CONNECTION TO MUTIJULU, WHERE SHE LIVED FOR MANY, MANY YEARS.

DURING THAT TIME SHE HELD SENIOR POSITIONS IN THE COMMUNITY. SHE WAS CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL. SHE STARTED THE NIGHT PATROL. SHE WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE N-P-Y WOMEN'S COUNCIL.

BUT LIKE MANY ANUNGU SHE MOVED FREELY BETWEEN THEIR COMMUNITIES IN THE REGION. NONETHLESS, HER GRANDAUGHTERS WERE LIVING IN MUTIJULU DURING THE TIME THE PAEDOPHILE WAS TRADING PETROL FOR SEX WITH YOUNG GIRLS. THE WOMEN'S COUNCIL SAYS MANTAJARRA WAS ALSO THERE AT THE TIME AND ACTUALLY PROVIDED POLICE WITH DETAILS OF THE

OFFENDER, INCLUDING CAR REGISTRATION NUMBERS.

BUT IS SHE A SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL FIGURE WHO SHOULD BE LISTENED TO?

ON THAT SCORE, WE WERE RECENTLY CONTACTED BY PETER SUTTON, WHO COULD REASONABLY BE DESCRIBED AS “ONE OF AUSTRALIA’S MOST EMINENT AND EXPERIENCED ANTHROPOLOGISTS, A LEADER IN HIS FIELD WITH A PARTICULAR EXPERTISE IN CENTRAL DESERT COMMUNITIES. PETER SUTTON SAYS THAT MANTAJARRA IS A VERY SIGNIFICANT PERSON IN THE REGION. AND GOES ON TO SAY:

“SHE’S A MATRIACH AND THE KEY POINT TO MAKE HERE IS THAT IN THE CENTRAL DESERT REGION, PEOPLE CAN ATTAIN A STRONG LOCAL STATUS AND SPEAKING ROLES WHETHER THEY ARE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OR NOT.”

HE GOES ON TO DESCRIBE HER POLITICAL IMPORTANCE WITHIN THE DESERT COMMUNITIES:

“TRADITIONAL OWNERSHIP DOESN’T COME INTO IT. SHE HAS A RESIDENT’S RIGHT TO SPEAK OUT. THE REASON SHE CAN SPEAK OUT IS BECAUSE SHE IS NOT BEHOLDEN TO ANYONE. SHE CAN MOVE AROUND AND HAS OTHER PLACES TO GO. WOMEN WHO DO NOT HAVE THAT ABILITY DO NOT SPEAK OUT”

THESE ARE IMPORTANT POINTS. WHEN MANTAJARRA WILSON DECIDED TO SPEAK TO US ABOUT THE PAEDOPHILE IN MUTIJULU AND OTHER DEPREDATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY IT WAS EXTREMELY SIGNIFICANT.

AND THAT IS WHY WHEN HER STATUS, HER RESIDENCE AND HER RELEVANCE WERE CALLED INTO QUESTION BY SOME JOURNALISTS AND ACTIVISTS...

THE THREE LEADING MEMBERS OF THE N-P-Y WOMEN'S COUNCIL; THE CHAIRWOMAN MUYURU BURTON; THE VICE-CHAIRWOMAN MARGARET SMITH; AND DIRECTOR YANYI BANDICHA WROTE TO "THE AUSTRALIAN" SAYING:

"MANTAJARRA WILSON AND THE OTHER PEOPLE WHO SPOKE ON LATELINE DID NOT MAKE UP THESE STORIES. THEY ARE NOT LIARS OR MAD"

IN THEIR LETTER THE WOMEN SAID THAT POLITICIANS AND REPORTERS WERE TREATING THE ISSUE AS "A POLITICAL GAME" AND "TWISTING THE STORY..

NOW I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT WHEN I READ THE WOMEN'S LETTER, PUBLISHED AS AN OPINION PIECE, I THOUGHT, "WELL, THAT ENDS THE DEBATE OVER THE CREDIBILTY OF OUR WITNESSES".

BUT THE LETTER WAS NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED BY OUR CRITICS AND QUICKLY FORGOTTEN BY EVERYONE ELSE.

NOW, I FEEL BOUND TO REVIVE IT'S CONTENTS. THIS IS WHAT THEY SAID:

"THERE ARE SOME MEN WHO WILL FIND WEAK YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS AND GIVE THEM

PETROL, GROG OR MARIJUANA TO GET THEM TO HAVE SEX WITH THEM”..

THEY EXPLAINED HOW DIFFICULT IT IS FOR PEOPLE IN SMALL COMMUNITIES TO SPEAK UP AGAINST MEN WHO ARE SOMETIMES FAMILY MEMBERS.

“SOMETIMES,” THE LETTER GOES ON, “THE MEN WHO ARE POWERFUL ON COMMUNITY COUNCILS ARE THE ONES DOING ALL THE TALKING AND SOMETIMES THEY ARE INVOLVED IN MAKING THE PROBLEMS.”

FOR OUR STORY, REPORTED BY SUZANNE SMITH, WE TALKED TO PEOPLE CURRENTLY WORKING IN MUTITJULU AND PEOPLE WHO WORKED IN MUTITJULU IN THE RECENT PAST. THEY ALL MADE PRETTY MUCH THE SAME KEY POINTS:

- THERE WAS A PEDOPHILE OPERATING IN THE MUTIJULU AREA FOR SEVERAL YEARS UNCHECKED BY EITHER WHITE OR BLACK AUTHORITY;
- YOUNG GIRLS WERE EXCHANGING SEX FOR PETROL WITH THIS MAN;
- THEY WERE CATCHING GONORROHA - AN STI, BY THE WAY, WHICH WILL LEAVE A YOUNG GIRL BARREN IF NOT DEALT WITH EXPEDITIOUSLY;
- AND THEY WERE ALL FRUSTRATED BY THE NEGLECT OF THIS ISSUE BY FEDERAL, TERRITORY, AND LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY GOVERNMENTS

CHIEF MINISTER, THIS IS WHAT YOU SAID YOURSELF ON THE DAY AFTER OUR MUTIJULU STORY WAS BROADCAST...AND I QUOTE:

"THERE ARE POWER STRUCTURES IN COMMUNITIES LIKE MUTITJULU THAT SEEM TO FRUSTRATE EFFORTS TO ACTUALLY IDENTIFY WHAT IS HAPPENING IN TERMS OF CHILD SEX ABUSE AND TO GET EVIDENCE GOING TO THE PROPER AUTHORITIES. SO THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE A SUCCESSFUL INQUIRY UNLESS WE FIND WAYS OF BREAKING THROUGH THAT. WE'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO BREAK THROUGH THE FEAR AND THE SHAME AND THE SILENCE WE SEE ABOUT CHILD SEX ABUSE IN OUR COMMUNITIES, AND WHAT I AM ANNOUNCING TODAY IS AN INQUIRY TO SHOW US HOW TO DO JUST THAT."

THE TRUTH IS THAT A GREAT DEAL WAS ALREADY KNOWN ABOUT THESE ISSUES.

NOT ONLY DID YOU HAVE THE INFORMATION ON WHICH YOU BASED YOUR 2004 MUTIJULU MEMO BUT THE PUBLIC WERE EXPOSED TO THE SAME HORRORS THE NEXT YEAR, AT THE CORONIAL INQUIRY INTO THE DEATHS OF THREE PETROL SNIFFERS HELD IN AUGUST 2005.

THE REPORTING OF THE INQUEST LIFTED THE LID ON MUCH OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN MUTITJULU.

IN AUGUST 2005, ANN BARKER FILED A PIECE ABOUT THE CORONIAL INQUIRY FOR THE ABC'S PM PROGRAMME WHICH FEATURED A GRAB OF GREG ANDREWS WHERE HE SAID YOUNG GIRLS WERE EXCHANGING SEX FOR PETROL.

ALSO IN AUGUST, AAP'S REPORTER QUOTED A SENIOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER WORKING IN MUTITJULU.

HER NAME WAS MARY TURNER, AND WE'VE NEVER HEARD FROM HER AGAIN, BUT SHE WAS SAYING PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING:

"GIRLS WERE GETTING CAUGHT UP IN THE DEADLY HABIT [OF PETROL SNIFFING] AND SOME GIRLS WERE PROSTITUTING THEMSELVES IN RETURN FOR PETROL".

THEN IN JANUARY 2006 ANN BARKER BROADCAST ANOTHER FINE PIECE ON MUTITJULU WHICH HAS SINCE RECEIVED A WELL-DESERVED WALKLEY NOMINATION.

SHE AGAIN USED THE GRAB OF GREG ANDREWS EXPLAINING THAT GIRLS WERE EXCHANGING PETROL FOR SEX.

(...IF OTHER JOURNALISTS IN THIS ROOM WROTE OR BROADCAST SIMILAR STORIES THAT I HAVEN'T MENTIONED I APOLOGIZE FOR NOT KNOWING ABOUT THEM - GOOGLE FAILED ME - BUT GOOD ON YOU, IT WAS A STORY OF IMMENSE PUBLIC INTEREST....

BUT BACK NOW TO MY MEMO..)

CHIEF MINISTER, ALL THAT TIME THE CLOCK WAS TICKING.

ACCORDING TO THE AUGUST NEWSPAPER OF RECORD, THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES, THE PEDOPHILE IDENTIFIED BY LATELINE WAS OPERATING IN THE COMMUNITY UNTIL LATE 2005.

ACCORDING TO THE NIT:

"OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2005: THE ALLEGED PAEDOPHILE DEPICTED IN THE JUNE 2006 LATELINE STORY IS RUN OUT OF THE MUTITJULU COMMUNITY BY LOCAL RESIDENTS AND PARKS AUSTRALIA, THE ALLEGED PAEDOPHILE'S FORMER EMPLOYER."

BUT DON'T JUST TAKE THE N-I-T'S WORD FOR IT: LATELINE SPOKE TO ANOTHER MUTITJULU DOCTOR, RICHARD JANUS, WHO CONFIRMED THE PEDOPHILE WAS ASKING HIM FOR VIAGRA PRESCRIPTIONS AS LATE AS OCTOBER 2005.

THAT'S ALMOST A YEAR BETWEEN YOUR OWN MUTIJULU MEMO ..AND THE PEDOPHILE LEAVING MUTITJULU.

ALMOST 12 MONTHS OF A PREDATORY PEDOPHILE GETTING SEX FROM YOUNG GIRLS IN EXCHANGE FOR PETROL.

NOW, THE JURY'S OUT ON WHAT EFFORTS WERE MADE TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THOSE WIDESPREAD AND REPEATED CLAIMS OF GIRLS PROSTITUING THEMSELVES FOR PETROL.

WHAT THE POLICE DID.. AND WHAT HAMSTRUNG THEIR EFFORTS IS ALSO UNKNOWN.

REMEMBER, TOO THAT, THE MUTIJULU COMMUNITY DOCTOR, GEOFF STEWART

(..WHO I MIGHT ADD LIVED IN THE COMMUNITY FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS...)

..TOLD US THAT HE MADE REPEATED ATTEMPTS TO GET FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES TO ACT ..

WHEN HE STARTED FINDING CLUSTERS OF VERY YOUNG GIRLS WITH SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES.

INCLUDING GONORRHEOA.. IN CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 10.

HE DESCRIBED HIS ATTEMPTS TO GET F-A-C-S TO ACT.. AS "THE CLASSIC BRICK WALL SCENARIO" .. DESCRIBING STAND UP ARGUMENTS TRYING TO CONVINCe PEOPLE TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE.

ONCE AGAIN.. WE DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT BROKE DOWN IN THE REPORTING SYSTEM.. A LOT OF THAT WILL BE BURIED IN DOCUMENTS.. AND "MEMO'S" NO DOUBT.. THAT HAVE STILL TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY.

IT WAS CERTAINLY OUR HOPE THAT THE SEXUAL ABUSE INQUIRY MIGHT GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THESE ISSUES..

BUT RECENT REPORTS INDICATE THE INQUIRY.. WON'T BE DELVING INTO THE PAST.

.. I ASK ONE QUESTION, IF THAT IS TRUE..

IS THAT REALLY GOOD ENOUGH?

CHIEF MINISTER.. LET ME FINALLY ADDRESS THE CONSPIRACY THEORY.. THAT LATELINE'S PROGRAM WAS "A SET-UP" .. TO JUSTIFY THE STATEMENT OF THE FEDERAL MINISTER MAL BROUGH ..THAT THERE ARE **PAEDOPHILE RINGS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.**

GREG ANDREWS APPEARED IN OUR MUTITJULU STORY FOUR TIMES.

AT NO TIME DID HE MENTION PEDOPHILE RINGS. HE DID SAY THERE WERE PAEDOPHILES OPERATING IN THE CENTRAL DESERTS, AND THAT YOUNG GIRLS WERE EXCHANGING PETROL FOR SEX. BUT THEN HE'D SAID THAT BEFORE PUBLICLY - AND IT HAD GOT HIM THREATENED.

SO BADLY THREATENED, IN FACT, THAT HE CHOSE TO DO HIS INTERVIEW WITH LATELINE ANONYMOUSLY IN ORDER TO AVOID MORE HARASSMENT.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, IT DIDN'T WORK. HE WAS OUTED IN THE MEDIA, AND – BY HIS ACCOUNT AND THAT OF HIS WIFE - HE WAS THEN HARASSED AGAIN..BY FAX AND PHONE THREATS.

CHIEF MINISTER, THE ONLY PEOPLE IN OUR PROGRAM WHO DISCUSSED THE QUESTION OF **“PAEDOPHILE RINGS”** WERE YOUR OWN ADVISOR ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, JANE LLOYD..

AND THE FORMER COMMUNITY DOCTOR, GEOFF STEWART.

JANE LLOYD MENTIONED PEDOPHILE RINGS MAINLY TO DEBUNK THE IDEA - BUT ALSO TO EXPLAIN THAT PAEDOPHILES IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES COULD RELY ON FAMILY AND KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS TO PROTECT THEM, AND THAT THIS WAS THE CASE IN MUTITJULU.

AND HER VIEWS WERE SUPPORTED BY DR GEOFF STEWART WHO SAID IN HIS LONG INTERVIEW:

"I DON'T BELIEVE THEY EXIST WITH THE CONNOTATIONS THAT GO WITH THAT TERM. I MEAN, WE'VE DESCRIBED ONE - AN INDIVIDUAL WHO'S BEEN ENGAGED IN THAT SORT OF PAEDOPHILIC BEHAVIOUR. SO, NO, THEY DON'T EXIST AND I'M CONFIDENT THAT THEY DON'T EXIST IN THAT WAY, BUT JANE IS CORRECT IN SAYING THAT THERE ARE SYSTEMIC AND STRUCTURAL ISSUES AT PLAY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY THAT HAVE ALLOWED HIS BEHAVIOUR TO CONTINUE AND IN SOME WAYS TO BE - WELL, IT'S NEVER OFFICIALLY CONDONED, BUT THEY'VE CERTAINLY BEEN INACTIVE IN TERMS OF DEALING WITH IT."

IN THE SCRIPT OF THE STORY ITSELF...WE STATED CATEGORICALLY:

"AS FAR AS LATELINE KNOWS, THERE IS ONE PAEDOPHILE AND HE RELIES ON HIS KINSHIP AND CEREMONIAL CONNECTIONS FOR PROTECTION".

CHIEF MINISTER, REFERING TO THAT VERY STORY IN PARLIAMENT YOU RECENTLY SAID:

"... IT WAS MADE UP TO TRY AND SUPPORT AN INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS MINISTER WHO HAD SIMPLY GONE ON NATIONAL TELEVISION AND DECLARED THAT THE TERRITORY HAD PEDOPHILE RINGS WHICH HE COULD NOT SUPPORT IN DETAIL"

THIS IS A FAMILIAR CRITICISM TO US, MAINLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES, BUT ALSO WITH SOME OTHER JOURNALISTS - ALAN RAMSAY AT THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD,

THE ALLEGATION IS THAT IT'S ALL A CONSPIRACY TO GET MAL BROUGH OUT OF A TIGHT SITUATION.

NOW, I ASK YOU, WAS JANE LLOYD PART OF A CONSPIRACY TO SUPPORT MAL BROUGH?

WAS THE ANONYMOUS PARK RANGER IN ON IT, TOO?

WAS DR GEOFF STEWART SPEAKING OUT IN PUBLIC ABOUT THESE SERIOUS ISSUES SOLELY TO HELP OUT MAL BROUGH?

WAS CLARE HOWARD?

AND WHAT ABOUT GREG ANDREWS, - WHO HAD ALREADY MADE SIMILAR ALLEGATIONS IN THE MEDIA BEFORE HE WENT TO WORK IN CANBERRA - WAS HE REALLY A CONSPIRATOR?

WAS MANTATJARA WILSON A STOOGUE FOR THE GOVERNMENT?

DID THIS ABORIGINAL ELDER, WHO SUFFERS FROM SEVERE DIABETES, REALLY TRAVEL FOR FIVE HOURS OVER DESERT ROADS TO BE INTERVIEWED BY LATELINE JUST TO HELP MAL BROUGH OFF THE HOOK? ARE THEY ALL DELUDED, OR SECRET MEMBERS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, OR - AS SOME WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE - LIARS?

I'D LIKE TO CONCLUDE.. TO THE LAST THREE LINES WRITTEN BY SENIOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN ON THE N-P-Y WOMEN'S COUNCIL BECAUSE THEY WERE SO MUCH MORE ELOQUENT ON THIS SUBJECT THAN I COULD EVER BE.

BECAUSE THEY'VE LIVED WITH THIS NIGHTMARE..
AND I ONLY REPORT ON IT.

HERE'S THAT THEY SAID:

“THIS SHOULD NOT BE A POLITICAL GAME FOR
NEWSPAPER REPORTERS AND POLITICIANS WHO
SHUT THEIR EYES AND THEIR EARS TO OUR
WORRIES AND OUR VOICES.

“WHEN THEY DO THIS THEY ARE TWISTING THE
STORY. THEY ARE REALLY SUPPORTING THE ONES
WHO DO THE WRONG THING, AND PUSHING US AND
OUR IDEAS AND PROBLEMS AWAY SO NO-ONE
HEARS US... AGAIN.”