

## **RESPECTING HISTORY AND REFLECTING ON AUSTRALIA DAY 2022 TO MAKE MORE MODEST PROPOSALS**

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### **MOVE THE ABORIGINAL TENT EMBASSY IN CANBERRA TO THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL SITE**

### **JOIN WOMEN OF THE NATIONAL FARMERS FEDERATION, BUSH HERITAGE AND OTHER GROUPS TO INVITE ANDREW FORREST OF FORTESCUE METALS TO SPEAK ABOUT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGAIN BEFORE THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB IN WOLLONGONG OR ELSEWHERE. SUGGEST PLANS.**

I was very interested in the NITV film on the history of the establishment of the aboriginal tent embassy in Canberra, which has now withstood the test of time for fifty years, from 1972 until the present. Until the case was so clearly presented in this documentary on Australia Day, the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022, I had not realised what appears obvious to me now. It is that for the Whitlam Labor Government of 1972, the introduction of equal pay legislation and symbolic federal recognition of aboriginal land ownership were two sides of the same supporting coin, which must be better understood together, to make more sense. I make suggestions later and attached for greener futures, avoiding courts and using plain and direct language wherever possible as legal language expensively mystifies issues to people still attracted or forced to remain living in a feudal light, as I am too, as a white woman.

We are all living on shared land so I attach a related discussion of land a lot of people of different backgrounds and interests are living on in shared housing in Glebe, Sydney, including me. We are rebuilding perimeter walls and fences with various neighbours. I outline some of our issues attached because I have always thought that in comparatively good societies the weakest do best by being as openly honest as possible. I deem Australia is comparatively good to all its people. On the other hand, I hate the Macquarie Bank and lawyers' forces as they appear designed to do the reverse of 'closing the gaps' with IT. I attach related discussions with MP Tanya Plibersek and local others about greener futures, regional waste management and the re-building of Australian manufacturing as usual. Responsibility begins with one's own choices, including about one's own death and reproductive functions, as I put to recent Royal Commissions in discussions attached. (Why is the local park still locked, with rubbish thrown into it? We can't afford bad management and there is plenty of it in Glebe, starting with waste, or what we call rubbish, as usual.)

Until Michael Anderson and others told the story, in the NITV Australia Day documentary, I never knew that four Aboriginal men founded the Aboriginal Embassy outside the Parliament House in 1972 or that they did so because Canberra is the home of foreign embassies and aboriginal people also wanted their voices to be equally heard, as the oldest continuous and surviving culture in the world. At first nobody would help them get shelter, but they had deck chairs and were tossed a beach umbrella from somebody in the building. This is essentially about history and a documentary is often my favourite form of education.

I have seen a lot of great historical documentaries since I retired. ABC, SBS and other Australian free to air TV are great resources which could be made more freely available to all more cheaply. Aboriginal media development has led the rest of us in many ways so far.

Before I saw the NITV Australia Day documentary, I never really understood the relationships which must be made between those who seek more equal pay and better housing in the global context in which we are now all enjoined to be greener first. Former PM Whitlam was a lawyer and his father was the Crown Solicitor. However, it is hard to fault his early vision for a regional future in which Australia plans for greener and more equal development by first looking after the natural assets of the country better, rather than wiping them out faster. The connexions are clearer now, so I make the above proposal to move the aboriginal tent embassy in Canberra to the Australian War Memorial site first.

To do so would begin to provide a more broadly honest and logical account of Australian history than we have at present, thanks to continuing US financial and construction industry influence over this ground. It would firstly also raise the key issue of the Whitlam government election, which was popular withdrawal of Australian forces from Vietnam, where they had been sent to please powerful US forces. Without this move of the aboriginal tent embassy to the Australian War Memorial, aboriginal people should face a charge of triumphalist lies or playing and then becoming the perpetual victims of history, while plenty of others have had it worse. As Mohammed Ali pointed out when refusing the US war draft, no Vietnamese ever came to America to bomb his land and home to kill him.

An article by Danny Chapman, chairman of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, was in the Sydney Morning Herald entitled '***Fifty years on, land rights still unfinished business*** (SMH 27.1.22, p.5). It points that in 1983 the Aboriginal Land Rights Act gave aboriginal people the right to claim and recover some Crown land to compensate aborigines for historic dispossession. A Land Rights network of local aboriginal land councils, (of which there are now 120 across the state) and a 15-year income stream to support aboriginal activities for future generations was set up. The network supports 'community enterprise initiatives, education and 'sorry business' and is a voice for aboriginal people in NSW'. Chapman reports there have been 53,914 land claims since 1983 and 72% of claims are outstanding. I am not surprised the system isn't working because lawyers encourage and multiply secrecy and mystery rather than more openly honest searches for truth. Plain honest accounts are vital. (I address some related matters regarding income and expenditure at St. James Court, to illustrate the difficulties which may arise if people like us aren't clear about what we are supposed to be doing together and whether it seems to make sense for future generations.

I appeal to Main Street against Wall Street, in the form of the Macquarie Bank, because the evidence in our case at St James Court appears consistent with key propositions in John

Kay's book, **Other People's Money: Masters of the Universe or Servants of the People?** Macquarie Bank and its DEFT system appears far from beyond reproach to me. I address this financial matter in personal terms at St James Court and more broadly attached in a birthday letter to MP Tanya Plibersek, to point to the need for better managed regional direction. Aborigines should lead it as much or more than anybody else. Open up and lead. I assure you nobody knows much about what they are doing in financial and IT matters. The removal of the aboriginal tent embassy to the war memorial would be open Soft Power.

Squatting on park or other public land meant for wider group use is a common means of drawing attention to a cause. In Japan, for example, unemployed and itinerant workers who may once have expected an iron rice bowl of work for life, may occupy Ueno Park in Tokyo to sleep in tents that are put up anew every night. In my cursory view as a foreign tourist, Tokyo had hardly any parks for the people already, although many gigantic embassy and palatial grounds remain in private hands. I've often thought governments should make do with journalists housed together to make things clearer faster and cheaper than the current expensively secret embassy lot and their family friends will ever want.

Although the Australian popular authorities allowed the aboriginal tent embassy to continue for 50 years at least, the Chinese and other students leading the occupation of Tienanmen Square and public places in America, Beijing, Hong Kong or many other places were eventually cleared and cleaned out by the public authorities or went home first. As an interested observer, I recommend taking the Aboriginal protest up a useful notch, by taking the aboriginal tent embassy down the road and setting it up outside the War Memorial instead. You could tell a much better regional story because it could be a lot more honest.

I hope you find a few of the suggestions made here and in attachments as helpful as I found your Australia Day documentary. See letters and submissions on related topics attached.

Cheers Carol O'Donnell, St James Court, 10/11 Rosebank St., Glebe, Sydney 2037  
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