

Cultural differences aside, the law is the same for all

WHILE it is the justice for the 14 year old girl when a 55 year old Aboriginal man is given a one month sentence (18/08) for the sexual assault on his "promised wife"

While jail is not good for indigenous Australians child sexual assault is a crime no matter what the cultural context

With one in four girls and one in six boys subjected to sexual assault the challenge for men who abuse and for judges who condone the abuse is to respect the integrity and rights of children and young people

There are good examples of community development programs in many transitional communities that challenge and change community values and practises that are harmful to children

While Judge Martin sympathised with the man for the difficulty in moving between traditional culture and Northern Territory law where is the community support for the teenage girl blamed for the elder's imprisonment and forced to flee from her community?

It is no longer good enough to talk about a clash of cultures

Anne Costin
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ABORIGINAL Australians will never assume full equality in this country until they accept like all minorities one law under which we all must be judged. If this is not achievable then we must talk not of a simple treaty but of annexing a section of Australia for a traditional lifestyle and rule of law while the rest of us get on with a modern lifestyle and its important responsibilities.

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PERHAPS the judge would care to advise whose culture would prevail if the under age sexual encounter had been with a non Aboriginal girl or if a non Aboriginal man was to have had a sexual encounter with an under age Aboriginal girl?

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