ROYAL COMMISSION IN CRISIS AS JUDGE RESIGNS.

Christopher Walsh

NT News, 2 August 2016, page 1

Less than a week after he was chosen to lead a royal commission into NT youth detention centres, Brian Martin has resigned, claiming he did not have the full confidence of sections of the community.

Mr Martin will be replaced by Indigenous Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda and former Queensland Supreme Court judge Margaret White. They were quickly appointed co-commissioners yesterday as the Federal Government attempted to salvage the credibility of the royal commission process.

But concerns now lingers over comments Mr Gooda made calling for the NT Government to be sacked after footage showing abuse of child prisoners aired on 4 Corners last week.

“The Federal Government has to intervene and sack the NT Government,” Mr Gooda said.

Page 2 (continued from page 1).

BLOW FOR TERRITORY ROYAL COMMISSION AS MARTIN STEPS DOWN.

Mr Martin also faced criticism for still being a reserve justice in the NT, for meting out light sentences for serious crimes in the past and concerns that he may have sentenced children to the Don Dale centre.

It was revealed the day after his appointment that his daughter Joanna had advised the previous Labor government on justice issues between 2009 and 2011 while some of the abuses of youth at Don Dale were alleged to have transpired.

It's believed she will give evidence to the commission.

He called that criticism “disingenuous and ill informed” yesterday.

“However, notwithstanding the nature of the commentary, it has become apparent that rightly or wrongly, in this role I would not have the full confidence of sections of the indigenous community which has a viral interest in this inquiry,” Mr Martin said.

“As a consequence, the effectiveness of the commission is likely to be compromised from the outset. I am not prepared to proceed in the face of that risk.”

Labor leader Michael Gunner commended Mr Martin on recognising the “issues” of his appointment and for standing down.

“We have got an opportunity now to do what maybe should have been done at the start which is to consult with the Aboriginal peak organisations of the Northern Territory and let's try and get this right,” he said. “This Royal Commission is really important, It must be independent.”

He added that indigenous groups were right to blame both Labor and the CLP and said both parties should have no role in administering the commission.

Photo: Royal Commissioner Justice Brian Martin holds a press conference in Canberra. He has resigned as Royal Commissioner into the Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. Picture Kym Smith.