

**SPEAKING AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN  
ABORIGINAL SOCIETIES**

Analysis of Senator Nova Peris' strategies in the Australian parliament

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This thesis examines domestic violence in Australian Aboriginal communities. Domestic violence is significant issue which reduces the quality of life of the whole community. This subject is viewed through parliamentary debates in which proper solutions are being debated. Main purpose is to find what kind of rhetorical ways Nova Peris, former Senator of the social-democratic Australian Labor Party and Australia's first Australian Aboriginal woman elected to the federal Parliament, uses to convince her audience that the Government has chosen the wrong path in reducing the violence in the lives of Australian Aboriginals.

My research material consists of number of Parliament speeches, in which Peris is speaking against cuts to the frontline services and other Government policies she viewed to weaken the position of Aboriginal people. Research method is rhetorical analysis combined with discourse analysis. Peris' political activities are also interpreted using the concepts of parliamentarism. Special attention has been paid to opposition rhetoric because Labor party was in the opposition at the time of Peris' term as a Senator.

The conclusions of the study state that Peris has some convincing arguments to back her demands. She has good arguments and facts that she uses to add to the credibility of her claims. She also manages to appeal to emotions in her speech. Then again, she uses very common opposition rhetoric and strongly criticizes the government, which may lose its effectiveness in a longer run.

**Key words:** Australian Aboriginals, Indigenous people, domestic violence, Labor party, opposition rhetoric

## TIIVISTELMÄ

### SPEAKING AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ABORIGINAL SOCIETIES

Analysis of Senator Nova Peris' strategies in the Australian parliament

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Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan perheväkivaltaa Australian alkuperäiskansojen keskuudessa. Perheväkivalta on merkittävä epäkohta, joka heikentää koko yhteisön elämänlaatua. Tätä aihetta tarkastellaan ongelmaa ja sen ratkaisuja käsittelevien parlamenttipuheenvuorojen kautta. Tarkoituksena on selvittää millaisia retorisia tapoja Nova Peris, tutkimusaikana sosiaalidemokraattisen Labor-puolueen senaattori ja Australian ensimmäinen liittovaltion parlamenttiin valittu aboriginaalinainen, käyttää vakuuttaakseen yleisönsä siitä, että hallitus on valinnut väärän tien väkivallan vähentämiseen Australian alkuperäiskansojen keskuudessa.

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu useista parlamenttipuheenvuoroista, joissa Peris puhuu leikkauksista palveluihin ja muista hallituksen päätöksistä, joiden hän koki heikentävän alkuperäiskansojen asemaa. Tutkimusmenetelmä on retorinen analyysi yhdistettynä diskurssianalyysiin. Periksen poliittista toimintaa tarkastellaan myös parlamentarismien teoreettisten käsitteiden kautta kiinnittäen erityistä huomiota oppositioretoriikkaan, koska Labor-puolue oli oppositiossa Perisin toimiessa senaattorina.

Tutkimuksen johtopäätöksissä todetaan, että Perisillä on vakuuttavia perusteluja vaatimustensa tueksi. Hän käyttää puheissaan hyvin muotoiltuja argumentteja ja faktoja, jotka lisäävät hänen väitteidensä uskottavuutta. Hän onnistuu myös vetoamaan tunteisiin puheessaan. Toisaalta hän kuitenkin käyttää varsin tavallista oppositioretoriikkaa voimakkaasti hallitusta kritisoidessaan. Se asettaa hänen argumentaationsa omaan genreensä eikä välttämättä ilmennä retoriikan tehokkuutta.

**Avainsanat:** Australian aboriginaalit, alkuperäiskansat, perheväkivalta, Labor-puolue, oppositioretoriikka

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

I chose to do the research for my *pro gradu* thesis on problems in the lives of Australian Aboriginal, because I have always been interested in the different cultures and roles of minorities in democracy. In Australia the minority issue is a noted problem, which is more conspicuous than in most states at comparable levels of national wealth and political organization. In many Aboriginal communities, people have different beliefs and customs than the mainstream Australian society composed of immigrants from different parts of the world, but which to a large extent follows British traditions with elements developed during the colonial period. When two cultures coexist containing significant differences in average levels of wealth, education, political power, etc., the situation tends not to be conducive in terms of democratic ideals.

In this thesis, I analyse speeches of Nova Peris, former Senator of the social-democratic Australian Labor Party, and Australia's first Australian Aboriginal woman elected to the federal Parliament. I chose her because I wanted arguments and insights from an Aboriginal point of view, and she brought up many issues from an Aboriginal's life in her speeches.

My research problem is: what kind of rhetorical ways Peris uses to convince her audience that the Australian government has not made right decisions in trying to reduce family violence in the lives of Australian Aboriginal women. I also attempt to evaluate whether Peris is right with her critical claims or whether her speeches are mainly meant for undermining the Government.

I am using as my research material parliamentary debates from the years 2013-2016, which were the years of Nova Peris' term as a Senator in Australia's Parliament. These debates can be found in the website [OpenAustralia.org](http://OpenAustralia.org), which is a non-partisan website run by a charity, the OpenAustralia Foundation and volunteers. The aim of the website is to make politics, speeches and statements more accessible and increase transparency of the Parliament. (OpenAustralia, 2020.) The speeches can be found also in the Parliament's own websites, but I decided to use mostly [OpenAustralia.org](http://OpenAustralia.org) because it had significantly more content.

Peris criticizes cuts that the Government, led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott, had made to the front-line services of Australian Aboriginals. She argues that these front-line services are vital in reducing domestic violence against Aboriginal women. She also talks about Closing the gap- target that aims for raising the health and life expectancy of Indigenous Australians to that of the non- Indigenous Australians by 2030. The aim of both the Government and Peris is to reach the Closing the gap target and to reduce violence against Aboriginal women.

Peris mentions Northern Territory and Australian Aboriginals multiple times in her speeches. Northern Territory is a federal Australian territory located in Northern Australia. People living in the area are often called Territorians. Over half of the people living in Northern Territory live in its capital Darwin but most of the Aboriginal communities are situated in the rural areas of Northern Territory.

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (in this study just the Parliament) consists of three elements that are the Queen of Australia, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Queen is represented by the Governor-General. The Senate is the upper house of the Parliament. The Senate consists of 76 senators, twelve coming from each of the six states and two from each of the mainland territories. The lower house of the Parliament, House of Representatives, consists of 150 representatives each representing one geographic area of Australia. Members of the Parliament are elected for a 3-year term and they represent the views of the people in their electorate while taking part in debates on proposed laws and public policy. The House of Representatives is the house in which the government is formed. (Australian Government 2018.)

Term crossbench is also used in this paper. The term refers to independent members and minor party members in the Federal Parliament of Australia. It can be also used to refer to the Parliaments of the Australian states and territories, but this study focuses on Federal Parliament. Those MPs sitting on the crossbench are members of Parliament who belong to neither the government nor the opposition parties. (Australian Government 2018.)

Australian party politics is often referred to as a two-party system. The 'two-party system' is used to describe a political system in which two political parties receive the majority of the votes and thus they are in dominant position. (Australian Government 2020.) In Australia

their average has been almost 92 per cent of first-preference votes (Strangio & Dyrenfurth 2009). Usually one of the them holds a majority in the Parliament and forms the government while the other forms the opposition (Australian Government 2020).

Australia does not technically have a two-party system, because there are three major parties. Currently the government is formed in coalition of the Liberal Party of Australia and The Nationals, which are both centre-right political parties. The Australian Labor Party is in opposition. (Australian Government 2020.) The situation was the same in the years 2013-2016.

Preferential voting has been one of the anchor points of Australia's two-party dominant system (Strangio&Dyrenfurth 2009). Instead of voting just one candidate, preferential voting systems enable the electors to rank candidates in the order of their choosing on the ballot. Preferential voting has had many significant influences on the development of Australian party politics. It encourages parties to find for potential secondary support in addition to their immediate support. Preferential voting has made electoral politics a search for the political middle ground. It has also managed to sustain the presence of minor parties and enabled the development of partnership between parties, one of the most prominent being Liberal-National Coalition. (Sawer, 2001.)

Compulsory voting in Australia has also had a similar effect to party politics. Compulsory voting keeps politics focused on the political middle ground. The political parties must appeal not only to their foundations, but also to the majority of the people to win the elections. The major Australian parties have been particularly adept to respond and incorporate new political challenges, for example environmentalism. (Strangio&Dyrenfurth 2009.)

## **1.1 Closing the gap-target**

Close the gap campaign was launched in 2007. "Put forth by Australia's peak Indigenous and non-Indigenous health bodies, NGOs and human rights organisations, the campaign emerged out of the 2005 Social Justice Report which argued for the basic right to health to be realized". (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013.)

The campaign aims for raising the health and life expectancy of Indigenous Australians to that of the non-Indigenous Australians by 2030. The native people are three times more likely to be in hospital due to self-destructive behaviour and health problems such as poor health of mothers and children. Injuries, diabetes and heart problems are a major issue. In addition, smoking, obesity and other behavioural risk factors are common. The results of many studies show that their situation is not bad only at the national level but also weak compared to other indigenous nations and results that have been achieved for example in Canada and New Zealand. (Neumayer, 2013, 1-2.)

Peris underlined on many occasions in her speeches that services provided to Indigenous Australians should not be cut and those choices make closing the gap almost impossible, which does not either lead to a more equal society. Many services that are provided to Indigenous Australians are crucial, for example legal aid, youth programs and childcare. These services aim to make sure that basic human rights, for example education and safety, are guaranteed.

## **1.2 Perelman's rhetorical analysis**

My research method is rhetorical analysis combined with discourse analysis. For rhetorical interpretation of Peris' argumentation, I use Chaïm Perelman's "The Realm of Rhetoric", where his basic theory of rhetoric has been clearly presented. Perelman's new rhetoric is based on classical Greek and Roman theories of argumentation. Perelman writes in his book that the argument aims to "acquire or strengthen public acceptance or support for the arguments put forward". The main idea is that the rhetor seeks to obtain public acceptance of his arguments by carefully trying to take the attitudes of the auditorium into account, which also influences his argument making it approach those that the auditorium is supposed to hold, and thus a consensus can be reached. (Perelman 1996, 17.)

Perelman also mentions that argumentation does not only seek approval but also action or, at the very least, readiness for action (Perelman 1996, 19). That means that the rhetor wants the auditorium not only to believe in the arguments but also to act on them. These acts could be almost anything from voting to advocating the arguments of the speaker. Irrespective of the teleological end goal, a consensus at the argumentative level between the rhetor and the auditorium has to be reached first.



According to Perelman, argumentation is comparable to dialectical reasoning, but he also states that the argument does not seek the logical or empirical validity of the conclusions but simply the public's approval. Perelman presents two kinds of audiences: a more restricted audience and a wider universal audience, which mainly refers to an ahistorical understanding of the humankind. Methodologically, a public rhetor can always be assumed to be referring to a particular auditorium when speaking. The speaker must be able to define the auditorium so that he or she can choose the right arguments to convince it. (Perelman 1996, 28.)

The speaker cannot, for example, expect an audience composed of professors and an audience composed of children to know the same things, so he must define the audience and to decide based on that, what arguments and what kind of style to use in his speech. A rhetor must know while speaking what kind of things people will find acceptable. Perelman speaks of these as pre-agreements. (Perelman 1996, 24-25.) In my research, I will try to determine what kind of audience Peris' speeches are addressed to and what kind of pre-agreements are used.

### **1.3 Discourse analysis**

I strengthen my interpretation with discourse analysis. To gain a deeper understanding of discourse analysis I am using two books by Arja Jokinen, Kirsi Juhila ja Eero Suoninen: "Diskurssianalyysin aakkoset" (1993) and "Diskurssianalyysi liikkeessä" (2002). Discourse analysis aims at finding meanings behind people's words. In other words: "diskurssianalyysi on kielenkäytön ja muun merkitysvälitteisen toiminnan tutkimusta, jossa analysoidaan yksityiskohtaisesti sitä, miten sosiaalista todellisuutta tuotetaan erilaisissa sosiaalisissa käytännöissä". (Jokinen & Juhila & Suoninen 1993, 9-10.)

Speakers are giving reports (suom. selonteko) while addressing the audience and in these reports, they use different kinds of known discourses. These discourses can be for example historical, biological or religious. For example, "I do what the Bible says" is a report that relies on religious discourse. (Jokinen et al. 2002, 23.) Moreover, "diskursseilla tarkoitetaan tässä verrattain eheää merkityssuhteiden kokonaisuutta tai merkitysulottuvuutta, joka rakentaa todellisuutta tietyllä tavalla" (Jokinen et al. 2002, 21). That means that discourses make people see the world in a certain way. A speaker must use these discourses in his/her

speech in a way that they are culturally understandable. This makes it easier to elucidate a large number of things and ideas because basic types of discourses are self-evident to particular populations; people belonging to them do not question the arguments as they contain a great proportion of familiar elements. (Jokinen et al., 2002, 22-23.)

Then again this is not always enough. A speaker can only assume what are the consequences of his/her actions in particular situation. An experienced speaker is mostly bound to be right, but it is almost impossible to know how each member of the audience reacts to different comments. Like Jokinen et al. writes the same strings can carry very different meaning potentials in different conversational situations. (Jokinen et al. 2002, 32-33.) This means that people might interpret the same things differently because of their gender or their experiences.

Rhetoric argumentation that is used in the speeches that I examine, is always partially dictated by a cultural grammar, which is partly discretionary, partly conscious and partly unconscious. This means that the speaker's cultural background, knowledge and opinions affect what he/she is saying even though he/she might even not be aware of that. (Jokinen et al. 2002, 128.)

In my study, I am analysing why Peris has chosen certain ways to convince her audience and what she seeks to achieve with them. While writing this text, I take into account that remaining objective in the sense of not choosing sides might be challenging and can affect my research, because I clearly feel as a person to be on Peris' side and wish well for her attempts at supporting the life of Australian Aboriginal people, especially the women facing domestic and family violence, but also the men. Kari Palonen's Weberian inspired arguments (Palonen 2008) about the relativity of scientific objectivity and the political legitimacy of choosing sides even in academic research hopefully supports my position, if I sometimes sound partial in my observations. One of Weber's key points that Palonen presents in his article is that scholars can never really be totally neutral towards the subject. He writes that by the textbook view, the objectivity can be reached by eliminating all the subjectivity and removing everything personal in the research process. Then again objectivity is not a quality that any scholars can possess. Scholar can never be totally neutral and claiming so would be escaping the personal responsibility of the scholar. Scholars are

necessarily involved in the research process, which means that they are in a constant situation of competition and controversy with other scholars. (Palonen, 2008, 74-75.)

## **2. ABOUT PARLIAMENTARISM**

In addition to my rhetoric and discourse analysis method of interpretation, I also interpret Peris' political activities using the concepts of parliamentarism. The main concepts of parliamentarism are deliberation, which means discussion between opposed points of views, representation of the citizens, responsibility of the government to the parliament and sovereignty of the parliament. (Ihalainen, Ilie & Palonen 2016, 1.) Sovereignty of the parliament means that it has power over the other government institutions, which include all executive and judicial bodies. All the proposals given by the current government have to be accepted by the parliament. It also holds the power to change and repeal any legislation, which means that it is not bound by written law.

These concepts make a parliament a unique representative institution (Ihalainen et al. 2016, 1). All the opponents sit in the same auditorium and they can comment on each other's speeches. This gives speakers like Peris multiple chances to try to convince their audience. Every speech is rhetorically and persuasively structured (Ihalainen et al. 2016, 7). Multiparty dialogue is considered important in ensuring plurality of perspectives and voices in parliamentary deliberation (Ihalainen et al. 2016, 133). This also reinforces representativeness and ensures that the voices of as many citizens as possible are being heard.

In Westminster systems, such as the United Kingdom and Australia, the parliamentary rules do not allow opposition parties to have much influence in policy making and the party or parties in government dominate the legislative process. In most cases, bills, which are proposed by the government, are passed by the Parliament whether the opposition parties are opposed to them or not. This concludes that parties are rather in power, in government, than in opposition. (Maeda 2015, 764.)

Deliberative parliaments are different to this because opposition parties actually have something to gain from the situation. Opposition parties usually have leverage on policies through processes which can for example allow distribution of committee chairs also to the opposition parties. In majoritarian ones, such as Westminster systems, opposition have nothing to gain and they are constantly in need to win the office. This means that their power-

seeking motivations are higher than those in deliberative parliaments. (Maeda, 2015, p. 764-765.) This also means that in the Westminster system, members of the opposition, like Nova Peris, are given a huge pressure to succeed in their rhetoric for the purpose of destabilizing the government.

In the Australian Parliament the major parties do not have the electoral strength that they used to have and that has resulted to increase of the minority governments. This also means that independent members and members of minor parties have become a stable and increasingly important part of the Australian Senate. (Prosser & Denniss 2015, 511.) The Australian 'two-party' system, in which one forms the government and the other is the opposition, has also a very strict voting discipline. Because of voting discipline, the independents and minor parties are often presented with the 'balance of power'. This means that the influence of individual and crossbench marginal member has become increasingly significant. These marginal members can shape legislation and the leadership from either a in the visible place of power or silently in the behind-the-scenes negotiations. (Prosser&Denniss 2015, 497.) This also means that both the government and the opposition aim to win them over to their side.

Despite the power that the members sitting on the crossbench may have, in the Australian Parliament as one of the Westminster systems, the opposition has still very little influence over legislation. (Kaiser 2008, 36.) This means that they have really nothing to gain while they are in opposition and their agenda is to simply convince the electorate that the government is wrong and unqualified to lead them. They need to convince the electorate of this so that the opposition could rise to the governing power in the next elections.

The Westminster model might seem less democratic than a deliberative model, because it does not allow opposition any influence, but it also has the advantage in enforcing competition between government and opposition. This means that there is a regular rotation in ruling party (Maeda, 2015, p. 773). This kind of rotation ensures that more parties can rise to the governing power at some point and implement those things that are important to their voters.

## 2.1 Speech in the parliament

Parliaments have had an important role in comparing modern issues and uncovering party-political agendas in debates where positive and negative sides of alternative solutions are compared. Parliamentarians debate on ideas and opinions, proposals and counterproposals and thus they problematize and reshape current conceptualizations of values, identities and relationships that are the basis of decision-making. The end goal in the debates is to affect the audience's thought, their beliefs and opinions in order to motivate them to act in a certain way. (Ihalainen et al. 2016, 134.)

Parliamentary dialogue is audience oriented which means that it is at the same time performed in front of fellow parliamentarians and wider, both present and virtual, audience. It consists of not just parliamentarians but members of the electorate, general public and the media. This dialogue has had a growing impact nowadays especially as a consequence of effective use of internet and multimedia that allows public more active participation and input. Parliaments and parliamentarians have increasingly central roles in debates and media, and it is important to note parliamentary uses and misuses of language, rhetorical discourse-shaped power and gender relations. Just as important is to consider parliamentary interaction and different political agendas. It is also worthy to note that parliamentary discourses stretch beyond parliament through media and lobby groups and also beyond national borders through inter-parliamentary dialogue and international relations. (Ihalainen et al. 2016, 133-134.)

The language in the parliament debates is conventionalized and uses special terminology and different forms of address. Its rhetorical force in any case relies on spontaneous interventions, cheerful remarks, hecklings etc. which can appeal both to the insider audience and the public audience. In many democratic assemblies, one of the highest parliamentary skills is to outwit political adversaries by giving quick and clever remarks by displaying a sense of humour. Speakers rely in their speeches heavily on the rhetorical commonplaces to single out certain metadiscursive representations that are culturally familiar and relevant to the audience. (Ihalainen et al. 2016, 137.) They have to be careful in choosing these commonplaces because the audiences are different, and it is almost impossible to be sure which commonplace is best for the situation. Many politicians play it safe and use commonplaces that are universally known and undeniable. Most importantly members in the

audience for Peris would most likely be Australian Aboriginals and voters of the Labor party. As an Aboriginal and member of the Labor party she can be expected to find appropriate commonplaces.

Alan Finlayson is a British political theorist and political scientist. He writes that Parliamentary speech is seen not only as a speech by researchers but as a representation of thought. It can be seen as an ideal situation in which the delegates are free from the limitations and able to develop their thinking and speaking are in line with the principles of evolving political institutions. The argument behind the opposition consists of the recognized right to oppose and criticize the government and aim to replace it. (Finlayson 2017, 20.)

Then again, the MPs that are in the government are not always free to speak without constraint. Multiparty coalition governments insist on negotiations between parties and that limits the political freedom of its members. (Ihalainen et al., 2016, 8.) It means that they are expected to stay in line with the government policies so that they do not increase distrust towards government. Those MPs that do not obey this, could be punished and in worst cases, be even separated from the party. Also, MPs of the opposition parties can be expected to follow the party line. Parties want to show unity and seem trustworthy to their voters and acting against parties' policies could be seen harmful for the credibility of the party. Party discipline describes the extent to which parliamentarians vote in according to the instructions coming from their party group. In Australia, party discipline is extremely strict. MPs who choose not to vote accordingly risk a punitive response from their party either in form of rapid expulsion or in a longer time period withholding party's endorsement, support and resources at the election time. Consequently, disagreement with party line is very rarely enacted on the floor of parliament. (Saunders & Stone, 2018.)

MPs take part in parliamentary debates to show the electorate their position on any matter (Finlayson 2017, 22). Then again MPs also want to show activity to the electorate because their absence and silence is not appreciated since they are elected to represent their voters. The electorate sees it important that the person they voted for is working actively to defend their voters' agendas. Thus, MPs might often feel pressure to gain media attention to make sure that their work is seen and heard. It is also relevant so that they are remembered in the next elections.

There are also specific rules of interaction that can for example apply in addressing in the parliamentary debates. Some Western parliaments, for example the House of Commons, the Swedish Riksdag and the Finnish Parliament, prohibit parliamentarians from accusing fellow parliamentarians of lying, or using particular insulting words. However, rhetorically skilful parliamentarians usually find other equally effective alternatives. (Ihalainen et al. 2016, 138.) MPs are expected to behave and dress respectfully and follow the instructions of the Speaker of the Parliament. Shouting is not allowed, but short remarks are even encouraged and often a sign of an experienced and skilful MP.

Speeches in the parliament must be able to bring out the authenticity and the personality behind the political profile. Politicians must be able to sell their ideas and opinions to the audience. In other words, it is not enough to make the audience understand the speaker. Speaker must be able to also convince them to identify with him/her, by making emphasis, expressing urgency and appealing to their feelings. Speaker aims to the situation in which the audience really to want to agree with him/her and also to act on that behalf.

## **2.2 Opposition rhetoric**

Nova Peris was a Senator of the Australian Labor party that was in the opposition at the time that Peris acted as a Senator. That is why I also present the rhetoric and practices of the opposition. Opposition groups play an important role in democracy: they criticize the actions of the government, present alternatives and demand ministers to justify the decisions made by the government.

Finlayson writes that “the most important feature of opposition is the institutionalization of alternative government” (Finlayson 2017, 21). Then again, opposition does not have a real veto power and the only way they can affect governments decisions is good reasoning and delaying. This brings us to the main purpose of opposition: rhetorical activity in debates and good reasons to reject the government’s position. (Finlayson 2017, 21.) Especially in Westminster systems the ability to weaken the government’s credibility is one of the most important means for opposition parties to succeed in opposition politics (So 2018, 589).



This means that oppositional speeches are not just free speech and variant version of the government. It allows views to be presented that are against the consensus of the government. The opposition can use rules and reasoning to try to break a fixed majority and try to speak other MPs on their side to rise to victory over the government. (Finlayson 2017, 22.) Particularly in opposition, effective performances and fine speeches are crucial. Having the capacity to capture and convince the audience on their arguments is the only way to gain any influence. It can also be challenging to find new methods and ways to stage confrontations of opinions and redefine the relationship between performances and varying audiences. (Finlayson 2017, 27.)

It depends on opposition parties and their MPs of what kind of politics the opposition aims to do. Finlayson quotes Ivor Jennings, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, who pointed out in 1935 that “Opposition members debate the government’s measures and go into the division lobbies against them not because they expect to be successful but because they consider that a formal protest is necessary”. (Finlayson, 2017, 23.) However, even a formal protest may have its place, especially if it gets media attention. Also, even the unsuccessful attempts show the electorate the opinion of the opposition and remind them that there is also the opposite view to the matter.

Finlayson brings out that modern opposition is seen somewhat noisy and keen to dramatic spectacles. This still does not refer to the decline of the quality of the debate or contradict the idea of Parliament as a centre of free and rational debate. They are just different aspects of practices in the Parliament and important connection between people and parliamentarians. (Finlayson 2017, 27.) It is also logical that the opposition would be seen as noisier and more dramatic than the government because of their role which is to overturn government proposals. That requires skilful rhetoric that also manages to appeal to people’s emotions. Dramatic spectacles succeed better in that than restrained speeches. This is also seen in Peris’ dramatic speeches that aim to appeal especially to people’s emotions.

Then again, with no veto power and chance to affect governments decisions, what prevents opposition from making senseless statements and creating false ideas in the minds of the public? Answer to this is an always present possibility that opposition could assume power at any time. Then the opposition would have to realize in practice what it had been contemplating in theory before. (Ihalainen et al. 2016, 264.) At this moment they might have

to detach themselves from the ideas that would not be possible, and they would most likely lose credibility in this process. It is similar to the promises that parties give before elections. If they cannot deliver on their promises they are seen as turncoats. This is also true with Peris and the Labor party. Labor party is another one of the two dominant political groupings in the Australian political system with the other one being the Coalition of Liberals and Nationalists. That means that Labor have to always have a credible political agenda, because there is every chance that they would assume power in the next elections.

Then again, some small parties that have no intention to become part of a larger party and have a very small chance to assume the power, can quite safely make statements that are false. Nowadays a social media is a battleground to different opinions and facts and even though social media also can work as a revealer of the false facts, it also can help to spread them. Spreading false truths is today easier than ever before. Small parties are also quite common in Australian political system. Then again, speeches in the parliament are often undergoing fact checking by many observant eyes and ears. Other MPs and also the media listen to the speeches carefully for the chance to catch senseless statements that they can then point out and possibly correct with their version of the truth. That means that no matter what, politicians must always be careful with their arguments and statements.

Westminster systems also offer institutionalized chances to discredit the government via weekly Prime Minister's question time (So 2018, 590). Rhetorical spectacles such as Prime Ministers Questions is mandatory in practice, and it is an opportunity for different groups to see their own reasoning represented, and also an opportunity to judge the actions of political leaders. (Finlayson 2017, 25-26).

Good performances during the question time are vital to the opposition parties. Even if the question time itself does not attract that many viewers, the media actively writes on its contents and provides signals on which side has the best arguments, the opposition or the government. (So 2018, 590.) Poor political performances do not create faith in a functioning political system or people's belief that politicians are genuinely advocating for their cause. The relevance of the opposition in the eyes of the citizens relays often on successful speeches in which they can convince their audience that they are necessary and their critique towards the government is appropriate. It also shows how little room for manoeuvre the opposition

genuinely has. The task of the opposition is to present criticism - and preferably real, serious proposals for improvement in bills, not misplaces or groundless claims.

### **3. CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

Senator Nova Peris, as an Aboriginal representative, acts in the Parliament in a specific situation. The rhetorical scene of her action is the difficult condition where the Aboriginals live in the geographic, economic, social, and political peripheries of the Australian society. Their condition is not democratic in a moral sense, because their multilevel peripheral position exposes them to a large number of hazards and vulnerabilities, which simple formal rights to participate in electoral political processes cannot address. These liabilities had recently been heightened by cuts in various supporting programmes meant to help in equalizing the position of the Aboriginals with mainstream Australians, which gave an added impetus on Peris' political activity in defending the rights of her constituency as well as gender and kin also in other federal territories. Violence is a specific problem in its own right in Aboriginal communities, but it is also an emblematic phenomenon of the plight of the people living in them.

In this section, I will give background to the challenges of Aboriginal people and review the literature on the subject. I also evaluate in what light the Aboriginals are written about and what are seen as the most significant challenges for them. I will start with the colonial past which has been seen as the starting point for the challenges.

Ruth Phillips and Robert Guthrie write about the effects of the colonial past of Australian Aboriginals. Phillips is Associate Professor in Social Policy, Social Work and Policy Studies and Robert Guthrie is Adjunct Professor of Workers Compensation and Workplace Laws.

In 2010 Australian Human Rights Commissioner stated that "The Commission regularly notes the special place of our nation's First Peoples, and has identified reconciliation as a critical platform for a healthy and robust multiculturalism" (Australian Human Right Commission, 2010). Phillips and Guthrie write that acknowledging Indigenous people's position in this statement means that they have been awarded equal rights to opportunity and equal claims to belonging in multicultural Australia. Still, the past has caused widespread disadvantage and inequality, which affects their lives every day. (Phillips and Guthrie 2018, 2.)

The colonial past resulted in Aboriginal people losing their lands, which gave a legal framework to condone force removal of children from their parents, social exclusion, and racism. Colonialism has a direct cause-and-effect relationship to the wellbeing of Aboriginals still today. Phillips and Guthrie write that the Government has not given enough effort in Closing the gap-target. (Phillips and Guthrie 2018, 5.) Government's most recent Closing the Gap report attests that any significant progress has not been made in halving the gap in Indigenous employment (Australian Government 2016).

Target itself has also been getting critique on "depoliticising Indigenous issues". Phillips and Guthrie bring up economic opportunities that are scarce in remote parts of Australia, especially where many Aboriginals live. Finding Aboriginals employment is seen as an important way to improve their socioeconomic situation, but it shouldn't happen at the same time as losing connection to their ancestral lands. Phillips and Guthrie emphasize that Aboriginal people must be helped to find work, but not at the expense of their home or culture. Based on the article, Aboriginals are being forced in the similar kind of situation as in the times of colonization, when they lost their homelands and were forced to give up on their culture. They present as a solution a semi-formal employment mixed up with customary practices and local traditions which would be an improvement to the government policies. (Phillips & Guthrie, 2018.)

Dr Adam Heaton writes about racism. He has a PhD in education and 20 years' experience working in the education, social sciences and social services sectors. He has published research papers in anti-racism and pro-social learning, and also produced more than 40 social research papers and policy-option papers for the Australian Government.

Heaton writes in his article "Combatting racism to create a better Australia: the potential of the national cross-curriculum priority of teaching Aboriginal histories and cultures" that racist ideologies emerge in daily interactions in Australian society, with 58–79 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population have reported that they have experienced racism more than occasionally. Racism has a big impact in social, mental and physical health and thus has an effect on finding a job and as a whole, quality of life. (Heaton 2019, 41.)

Heaton's study points clearly that racism demands more effective solutions and that initiation has to be as early as possible. Children learn racist behaviour very early from the society around them and that is why they also have to get opposing examples to show that children from the Aboriginal background are not really that different. He also highlights in his text the importance of education in reducing inequality. Children come from very varying backgrounds and high-quality education can smooth out differences in origins of life. Some children come from the families, in which racism is more acceptable than in others. That is why children have to learn in school and from each other that racism is absolutely unacceptable. Heaton writes that adding Aboriginal history and culture in national curriculum reduces the amount of negative discourse and racism. It helps students to identify and reconsider their thoughts and feelings towards Aboriginal people which reduces racism in their society. (Heaton 2019, 42.)

Alanna Kamp, Kevin Dunn, Yin Paradies and Kathleen Blair write in their article "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's attitudes towards Australian multiculturalism, cultural diversity, 'race' and racism" that, based on studies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are less supportive of cultural diversity than non-Indigenous Australians. It was explained by many reasons, one being their references to many cultural groups, and the inclusion of Aboriginal cultures as an afterthought or as just one among many cultures. They see themselves as the First people of Australia, so including them to the same multicultural group as all the immigrants, who have moved to Australia much later, feels offending to them. Multiculturalism also demands a primary and overriding national commitment to the Australian national state, to the English language and to the institutions of Australian democracy. It can be seen overriding the Aboriginal culture and their language and habits. Third reason is, of course, the stereotypes and negative perceptions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to suffer from non-Indigenous Australians, and the fact that they experience racism at levels well above the average. (Kamp, Dunn, Paradies, Blair 2018, 53.)

Reducing unemployment is also one of the largest contributors in increasing the quality of life of Aboriginals. Vanessa S. Lee who is Master of Public Health-Doctor of Philosophy (MPH, PhD) writes on her article "Political determinants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women: don't leave your integrity at the political gate" that The 2014/2015 Australian social survey found out that less than half of Aboriginals were employed, and

males were twice as likely as females to have a full time work. The employment gap between Aboriginal and all the other Australians had been intended to be halved to 2018 and research showed very little progress. Finding employment has been especially difficult in remote parts of Australia. This is problematic especially since finding employment very often means that they have to leave their ancestral land and their culture behind. (Lee, 2017.)

Lee also writes that the 2011 Australian Census showed that Aboriginal women have a much poorer state of health than non-Indigenous women because of their inferior life circumstances. There was a huge difference in employment and education: only 39 per cent of the Indigenous females were employed, which is remarkably low compared to 55 per cent of the non-Indigenous females. When viewing education, 4.6 per of Aboriginals had completed a bachelor's degree or higher degree while the percentage was 20 per cent of the non-Indigenous people. Lacking education leads to lifelong disadvantage which also reduces chances to find employment. (Lee 2017.)

Lee writes that one of the problems is that, "the community health programmes focus on communal approaches rather than what influences individual's lifestyle choices. A failure to address the causes leading to social factors that underpin the individual's lifestyle choices reveals a half-hearted attempt by governments and institutions to understand the socio structural causes of illness and health". (Lee 2017.) Communal approaches are blamed for ineffective solutions. These problems need an individual approach, that views everyone as an individual and entitled to safety and help in need.

Kamp et al. writes that this shows political failure from the Australian Government to cooperate with the Aboriginal people. It also shows lack of proper policy administration and leadership. It is hard to see any real results in Closing the gap, if policies are made hastily and without cooperation with Aboriginal people. (Kamp et al. 2018.) Lee writes that policies developed for Aboriginal have added inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people instead of closing the gap. Level of inequity is particularly worrying regarding Indigenous women. (Lee 2017.)

Martin Brueckner, Rochelle Spencer, Gareth Wise and Banduk Marika write that the one of the largest contributions, to the lives of many Aboriginal people, would be equitable access to education and paid work. Even so, the Government's obligation-based approach to address

disadvantage only fixed part of the problem, offering socio-economic improvements at the expense of culture and tradition. One of the proper solutions presented in this article was cross-cultural learning in Nuwul centre where staff were taught local cultures and tradition mixing all that with western ways of knowing and doing. That was proof that enterprises can be successful in creating employment and preparing their local staff to also work elsewhere. Nevertheless, policy settings demand greater flexibility to enable the growth of grassroots ventures blending Indigenous and Western cultures together. Trying to force Western culture and stomping Aboriginals will not get good results. (Brueckner, Spencer, Wise & Marika 2016.)

### **3.1 Domestic violence and alcohol abuse**

Next I move to the main issue that Peris presents in her speeches. That is domestic violence associated with alcohol abuse. As literature here I use mainly Jane Lloyds' research on the nature of violence in Australian Aboriginal communities and Malcolm Frost's research on violence and anxiety in Aboriginal communities. Jane Lloyd is an applied social anthropologist. She has lived in Central Australia 30 years and has been involved with research, advocacy, as well as policy and program development. She has been active in, e.g., Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) and Australian Crime Commission's Task Force on Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse.

Malcolm Frost was Senior Psychologist at the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and has also worked as the Manager of Wellbeing Services at the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia, Queensland.

I will also use the concepts of domestic violence and family violence. They are mainly used interchangeably and they both refer to acts of violence between two people in intimate relationships. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse. Family violence then again is a much extensive term that refers to all violence between family members, not just intimate partners. (Lloyd 2014, 108.)

Domestic violence among Australia's Aboriginal communities has been for long in the focus of the government, judicial system, law enforcement and media reporting. Still, in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, there is still a culture of blindness about the



extent and nature of domestic and family violence. Death rates of Indigenous people in The Northern Territory are 2,3 times higher than non-Indigenous people's rates. Also, the indigenous people have been experiencing assaults six times compared to the rate of non-Indigenous people. (Lloyd 2014, 90.)

Jane Lloyd writes in her article in Australian Aboriginal studies that "Aboriginal violence is the achievement of a critical mass of self-generating human psychological dysfunction based on normal human responses to traumatic circumstances." (Lloyd 2014, 90). What she means is that violence exists all around Aboriginal society. The problem is not in the culture as has been thought often. Violent acts are psychologically normal behaviour from any person who is forced to live under continuing crisis-situation.

Malcolm Frost argues in his article that there are three reasons for violence. The first is that violence is part of a lot of aspects of Aboriginal society. This means that they see violence in streets, at home and everywhere around them. There are street fights, family violence, sexual assaults, punitive violence and etc. Secondly, it seems that Aboriginal people do not take responsibility for their own actions. In her interview Dr. Rogers described factors that contribute to the level of silence regarding domestic violence in Aboriginal cultures. One of the reasons was that Aboriginal people choose not to take responsibility for their own actions. When something horrible is happening, they turn the blind eye. They keep the wheel of violence turning and blame the culture, old habits and manners for their actions. Thirdly, Aboriginal society is highly punitive, so if a report or statement is made against an offender and offender gets into trouble because of that report or police statement, the potential witness will be subjected to harassment, intimidation, and sometimes physical violence. This makes it almost impossible to intervene in violence. Without witnesses, the perpetrator cannot be convicted and that weakens the judicial system. (Frost 2014, 91.)

All this violence creates a malicious circle that feeds the violence and anxiety that Aboriginal people feel. Even an infant, who is abused or neglected, can form borderline personality disorder that makes it harder to cope with stress while growing up. People with disorder have a rapidly changing mood and their mood can change very fast from calm to explosive anger and fear. Malcolm Frost argues that these offenders are at the same time also victims and they should be encouraged to come forward for assessment and treatment to change their behaviour instead of sending them to prison or punished some other way. He compared them

to HIV-patients: if Australia had persecuted those patients, the spread of infection could have been way worse. (Frost 2014, 92.) The long-term solution is not just to provide services for the victims, but also try to stop the violent behaviour all together. This will also prevent children from being exposed to so much violence and then breaking the circle of violence might be done at some point.

Jane Lloyd writes in her research that the acceptance of violence as something normal and inevitable by family and the whole community indicates that the system cannot depend on reporting and victim disclosures alone to drive the response to this violence (Lloyd 2014, 103). Frost also argues that a firm and consistent response to payback must be applied. Inventions that are used to reduce the violence are often powerless, because of the punitive culture that dominates the Aboriginal communities. (Frost 2014, 97.)

Aboriginal people are overwhelmed with violence because they do not just witness it all the time but also face new tragedies from time to time. All these tragedies, for example suicides, murders and diseases, overtake the community. Children grow up in a frightening and dangerous environment, which teaches them that violence is part of everyday life and as so, normal and acceptable. Aboriginal people have their own cultural ways to deal with violence and they maintain a so-called punitive culture in which violence has a big role. Potential witnesses of domestic violence are often subject to harassment and violence, so they choose to stay silent fearing the consequences of their statements. (Rogers 2006.)

One of the main reasons for domestic violence is jealousy. In the study by Malcolm Frost, the clear majority of Aboriginal people stated that so-called “jealousing” was a significant cause for domestic violence. When feeling jealous one client stated that he would “blow up” like many other Aboriginal people. (Frost 2014, 93.)

Punitive actions towards other people in many cases were due to people “doing the right thing” which would for example reporting on violence. Many clients stated in the interviews performed by Frost that income management was a good thing and they liked it, but they could not say it to anyone else without getting “flogged”. (Frost 2014, 93).

Income management is described, on the webpage of the Australian Department of Social Services, to be a tool that helps people budget their welfare payments. The purpose is to

ensure that they can afford the basic essentials such as food, housing, electricity and education. Improved financial situation helps people to take control of their lives and to be able to take care of their children. Income Management is operating across Australia but is essential especially in Northern Territory. (Australian Government, Department of Social Services 2020.)

Government carried out different campaigns to reduce the violence, but with some of them, it unknowingly at the same time increased the anxiety in Aboriginal people. For example, they created a commercial that required Aboriginal people to report the violence they witnessed. The witness after seeing the commercial, came forward and told about violence that he had witnessed, because he feared that he would be charged with an offence if he did not. However, charges were never brought up because when the police arrived at the scene the situation was over, and all violence was denied by parties involved in it. Also, witness' actions resulted in him getting abused. (Frost 2014, 96.)

Women also reported that they did not want their partners to be imprisoned or punished for reasons of pure love and support. They just wanted the violence to stop. (Frost, 2014, 96) This again leads to unreported crimes and distorted statistics about domestic violence, which makes protecting the Aboriginal women even harder. Jane Lloyd investigated murders of women in Aboriginal communities in Central Australia and found out that in many cases the intent to harm these women was clear. The distinctive features of the domestic-related homicides from this region gave good information about the nature and extent of the violence. They indicated the offenders' intent to cause serious harm or death, the extent of repeated offending and victimization, and other common situational factors. (Lloyd 2014, 103.)

Frost wrote that even though there are good examples of public health approach to violence treatment, most cases are far more complicated and revolve around deep dysfunctions in personality and the atmosphere of anxiety and chaos that these personalities create. (Frost 2014, 92.)

Jay Shore and Paul Spicer wrote in their research that in Australian Aboriginal communities' members have a series of beliefs and expectations on how alcohol affects community member's emotional response and behaviour. The behaviour that follows is

dependent on the interaction of the person's beliefs on alcohol and fighting, but also on characteristics of the community and situational factors. Often this leads to a situation where a drunk individual will bring out in the open his (sometimes her) tensions and grievances and then address them through violence. (Shore & Spicer 2004, 2519.)

Alcohol has a big role in family and domestic abuse. Jane Lloyd investigated domestic violence-related homicides in the Aboriginal community in 2000-2008. There were 15 murders in that timeline and in 12 of them the offender had consumed alcohol. She wrote that alcohol is not only a substantial contributor to the violence, but it also influences the capacity and willingness of witnesses to interfere in violent incidents. (Lloyd 2014, 101.) Alcohol related violence is a serious issue in many Australian Aboriginal communities, but similar problems can be also detected in many other Indigenous communities around the world.

### **3.2 The Basic Standpoint of Nova Peris**

Nova Peris was elected to the Senate for the Northern Territory in 2013. Her party is Australian Labor Party which is considered a social democratic centre-left party and has very similar agendas as Peris based on their National platform. Labor's National Platform is created to provide a clear statement of Labor's beliefs, values and program for government. (Australian Labor Party 2018.)

First, in the national platform, is mentioned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and respect towards them. Second, the dedication to the Closing the Gap is brought up in the purpose of giving the Aboriginals equal opportunities as other Australians. They also mention, that "the government has a responsibility to keep the nation safe, to invest in all our people's potential, to reverse disadvantage and to care for the most vulnerable among us". (Australian Labor Party 2018.)

These are exactly the same values and agendas that also Peris is seeking to promote in her speeches. There are two main critiques that Peris has against the Australian government. First are the cuts that have been made to the front-line services of Australian aboriginals.

The Katherine women's legal service provides vital front-line services to victims of family violence, and I repeat: this is the only one in Katherine. They have had their funding cut in half by Senator Scullion. They now have to reduce their staff by two, move to smaller premises and cut back on vital work that they do in remote communities in their outreach program. (Peris 2015/1)

“Katherine” that Peris refers to in her speech is a town in the Northern Territory of Australia. Blame for the cuts in Peris’ speeches is directed straight to the minister Scullion who was Minister for Indigenous Affairs at that time. Senator Nigel Scullion was elected to the Senate for the Northern Territory in 2001 and he acted as a Minister for Indigenous Affairs from 2013 to 2019. His political party is the National Party of Australia which is a political party largely representing rural, agriculture-based electorates and which formed the Government in coalition with the Liberal Party of Australia, which is considered conservative right-wing party. Australian Labor is viewed as a left-leaning political party. (Measham & Lockie 2012, 48.) This means that the parties are on the quite opposite sides of the political spectrum.

Scullion’s response to the Peris’ accusations was sharp.

To say to Australians that we have cut without saying what we have reinvested in, which is far greater, is completely disingenuous. --- Part of the challenge in this particular portfolio is we cannot close the gap if we have services that are being delivered substandard with low expectations. The same people have been doing it year after year after year. That is going to change on 30 June because those who are doing the services are going to be in a contract that basically focuses on outcomes. (Scullion 2015.)

Minister Scullion does not deny the cuts but claims that the money had been reinvested in other services. He points out that the financing must focus on the results of services and those services that provide low results should not be funded. This is quite common right-wing rhetoric because strict financial discipline is often considered important for the continuity of the well-being of society.

Peris claims instead that cuts are one of the main reasons why the amount of family violence has increased. The front-line services are first aid for Aboriginal women who have suffered

domestic violence and Peris argues that these services have not been sufficient. Labor party has described frontline services more specifically in their National platform:

Frontline services include for example early intervention, crisis support and legal assistance and are meant to those people who are at risk of homelessness or fleeing domestic violence or being excluded from their community. Services aim at building community's capacity to respond emerging social challenges. (Australian Labor Party 2018.)

Labor also promises to “provide a regional services guarantee that improves services for regional Australians, delivers a net growth in permanent jobs in regional cities and provides a framework for any future service improvements and regional job creation through a balanced approach to public and private sector decentralisation.” The Labor is opposing multiple cuts in their National platform and promising that in contrast to the cuts, they ensure that necessary services are offered all around Australia. (Australian Labor Party 2018.) This is especially important to Aboriginals of which many live in remote areas and that is also why Peris underlines it in her speeches.

The other issue is the alcohol as a cause for domestic violence. Alcohol has had a remarkable role in violent acts, and especially in domestic violence. That is why, it cannot be ignored when talking about violence in Aboriginal societies.

In the last year there were 7,674 assaults in the Northern Territory, and 4,627 of them were domestic violence assaults. Around the same number, 4,631, were linked to alcohol abuse. (Peris 2013.)

A recent report on domestic violence in the Northern Territory by KPMG found that only 18 per cent of domestic violence cases in the Northern Territory are not related to alcohol and drugs. That means four out of five domestic violence cases involve alcohol and drugs. (Peris 2013.)

There is no denying that alcohol is a real problem, according to Peris. She says that 82 per cent of all the domestic violence is related to alcohol and drugs. This amount is enormous and gives a reason to consider ways to reduce alcohol consumption. We can thus understand that Peris is fighting an imperative battle for her own people against the

government, which is weighty both in respect to the life of so many individuals, but also in respect to Australian democracy and human rights.

## **4. ANALYSIS OF PERIS' SPEECHES**

I will analyse Peris' speeches by using methods presented earlier and starting with analysing the audience. The audience plays an important role because the rhetorical means of speech must be chosen to match the audience in particular. After this I will analyse speeches with the methods of rhetorical and discourse analysis.

### **4.1 Audience**

Peris is a political actor trying to improve the condition of Australian Aboriginals, but simultaneously she is also an elected parliamentary politician, who is under the pressures and rules of conduct that follow from that kind of honoured but also challenged position. Her immediate audience consists primarily of other members of Parliament. They are the people whom she must convince since they are the people who make the final decisions and vote based on their opinions. Of course, anyone can have access to speeches that she has given, but members of the Parliament are the ones that Peris relies on to take practical legal and political action.

Then again, voting decisions in parliaments are usually made based on how each political party decides to vote and it is difficult for an individual parliamentarian to effectively influence standpoints over party or block boundaries. In the opposition, Peris' job is to criticize the government. Her aim is to gain support from the audience, which of course is some of the members of the parliament, but also in a larger sense the public that is watching and listening to her speeches, either directly or mediated by the press and social media. Her job is to convince them that her suggestions on certain points are better than those of the Government. She also has to try to keep her voting constituency willing to continue supporting her. One significant electorate group is Australian Aboriginals for herself being also Australian Aboriginal and thus she can be seen as representing their standpoints quite directly in the Parliament. She was also the first Australian Aboriginal woman to become a member of the parliament, so it is likely that there were a lot of expectations towards her. She also competes especially with the parliamentarians of the National party since their main electorate are rural areas of Australia in which many Australian Aboriginals live. Because of this, it is logical and important that she brought up a lot of things that affect Australian Aboriginals.



Peris needs to win the support of the audiences to which she is addressing herself, which is a clear-cut Perelmanian rhetorical state of affairs (Perelman, Winchester & Verene 1984, 130). The audience consists of people with different viewpoints, especially when we take those outside of the Parliament into account. That is why she has to use common language and say things that are easy to understand. Her audience can be assumed to consist mainly of adults; people who can be expected to understand something of politics, but not specifics. That is why she must speak in a language that anyone can understand. All the senate debates can be watched live on the internet and also the media writes about themes and discussions in the Parliament. Peris needs and wants people's attention to prove her point to them. Consequently, she must carefully decide which way to speak to the audience. Her topic must be interesting and opinion-provoking to create interest in people. If she manages this, it will most likely create interest in the media and that is how she gains more attention to her point of views.

The audience also consists of people who are members of different political parties or who are uncommitted to any parties. Mainly, in practice, her job is to convince people who think the same way as she does, but it is also important to convince people who haven't picked a side or are possibly willing to change sides. To convince the audience, the speaker must have understanding on what matters she can have consensus with the audience (Perelman, 1996, 18). Political and social views are essential here because she must adapt her speech so that it does not go against her supporters' views but also are wide enough so that she can possibly convince people who haven't earlier been her supporters. They have different opinions on matters, and they have preconceptions on what other people are going to say and whether they agree with them or not. Members of the Liberal party for example know up to a certain point what members of the Labor party think about certain issues and they also might have prejudice against members of an opposing party that makes it harder to convince someone from a different political party.

Also, most of Peris' audience consists of non-indigenous people that do not have that much knowledge about life of the Australian Aboriginals. That means that Peris must give background information and facts about the most important issues at least, so that the audience gets enough erudition.

Perelman writes that sometimes the speaker can ignore some of the audience and only concentrate on a part of it (Perelman, 1996, 21). Peris often engages in this in her speeches. She does this by pointedly focusing her criticism towards the government. Members of the Government also hear her speech, but it is very unlikely that she will convince them to change their opinions especially because the party discipline is very strict in Australia. That means that she habitually might just ignore them as her target audience. She gives them quite a lot of blame in many of her speeches, and she would hardly be so harsh if her main objective was to make them turn towards her point of view. Despite this, because of the preferential voting system and compulsory voting she has to be able to find some sort of middle ground and convince most of the audience, even if it were impossible to convince the members of the government.

Nova Peris is certainly also biased when talking about issues of Australian Aboriginals. She is Senator but also an Aboriginal woman. This means that she is personally associated with the subject at hand. She most likely knows a lot of people who have suffered because of family violence. She might be exaggerating their issues to make people recognize the severity of the problem or she might, perhaps not necessarily even realizing it herself, hide some aspects that could support her opponents' point of view. Then again, her being part of the Aboriginal community gives her a wider and deeper understanding of their issues. Her knowledge also makes her an expert that should be listened to and gives her a solid base in criticizing the government.

## **4.2 Pre-agreements**

Peris relies on her speeches on certain pre-agreements. Aboriginals' right to have necessary public services, just like any other people in a welfare state, is one of those pre-agreements. The other pre-agreements rest on certain values that democratic welfare states usually uphold. Those values are for example the right to be protected from violence and other physical or mental harm, and to get help if necessary. Australia is also a country that relies on the market economy, which takes pride in balancing the budget in a responsible way. That is why she also relies on the pre-agreement of making economically wise and responsible decisions.

Cutting legal services for family violence prevention is a national disgrace. This government is tolerating the unbelievable and unacceptable violence that women in the Territory suffer. (Peris 2014/3.)

Peris argues that these front-line services, for example legal services, are vital for the women who suffer domestic violence. Sufficient services are the basis of the welfare state. These services are not only helping women to cope with violence but are also important in preventing future violence against them, as well as possibly gradually lowering the general levels of violence. Domestic violence is very common in Aboriginal communities and that makes it a broad problem.

Peris aims to make the government actions sound controversial since it is ostensibly trying to reach all the Closing the gap targets, but it is at the same time acting in a way that can be expected to take policy in the wrong direction and cause even more harm to Aboriginal people. Peris' claims are accusatory, and it is clear that she also wants to stir emotions with her comments. She says that the government is tolerating the violence that women suffer; her object is most likely to make the ministers feel unsure about their decisions, but also to convince the audience behind tv-screens that the government is going against its own agenda that the politicians promised to the people who voted for them. It helps that family violence touches almost all of us somehow, irrespective of race or ethnicity. We might have suffered from it ourselves or we know someone who has. That makes this subject more adjacent and personal to the audience. People can identify better with Aboriginal women if they can identify themselves in that kind of desperate situation.

Alcohol is a challenging topic because people have so many different opinions about it. There is no clear universal agreement or opinion about the use of alcohol, but it is still a subject, which is constantly raised when discussing domestic violence. This means that Peris must find the middle road between the extremes. She cannot say that she would prefer banning all use of alcohol, but she can neither say that all kinds of uses of alcohol are acceptable, especially when alcohol and domestic violence are so eminently linked. Her argument is thus constructed on these lines:

Let me state for the record that I do support the responsible use of alcohol. Like most Australians, I too enjoy a social drink on occasions, but I stand

here tonight to remind some of you—and perhaps inform others—that alcohol-related violence and crime is one of the biggest issues in the Northern Territory, and has been for decades. (Peris 2013.)

The middle road in her case is to say that responsible use of alcohol is acceptable. This way she cannot be blamed for supporting the violence that alcohol has caused, but neither for denying people their right to use alcohol in a moderate way. Emphasis is strongly on moderation, and perhaps also on location. Northern Territory may need rules somewhat different from Canberra, where the Parliament convenes.

She does not need to explain her view on the harmful effects, because negative side-effects of irresponsible drinking of alcohol are universally known. Alcohol used irresponsibly in great amounts and mostly by males in that manner is considered a risk for the safety of women and children, and even for other males. On the other hand, she must justify her harsh criticism of the use of alcohol particularly in the Australian Aboriginal communities. She says that alcohol-related violence and crime is a huge issue and because the aim is to reduce domestic violence, something must be done for use of alcohol. With this, she also seeks justification for making decisions that may not be accepted under different circumstances. The argumentative horizon here is the Banned Drinker register which by some people was claimed to be too patronizing. The register was used to reduce violence by not allowing the purchase of the alcohol for those who had a record of domestic violence. This is also why Peris underlines the seriousness of the situation and uses blame that could be seen even as an act of desperation.

I have said it before and I will say it over and over and over again: this is a statistic that every Australian should be made aware of, and be embarrassed by. (Peris 2014/2.)

She also trusts that people have the same feelings about violence that Aboriginal women suffer. She talks about statistics that compare the violence between Aboriginal women to other Australian women. Her assumption is that when people hear and see about violent incidents taking place in families, they feel that it is not right, and they feel that something must be done about it. At that level of abstraction, she plausibly can have the assumption that her listeners share the same values. Violence is not universally acceptable; it is

universally unacceptable unless specific conditions apply, such as self-defence, legitimate police action, or legally justified war. Universal acceptance at the level of values is important in argumentation. (Perelman 1996, 34.)

Then again, budgetary cuts are something that nobody does willingly. They are often referred to as absolute necessity when there is no better choice. When cuts are made, serious consideration takes place on which services to cut. Several of the possible audiences would likely be on Peris' side in criticizing front-line services being in the receiving end of budgetary cuts.

Cuts are also easy to criticize because no one wants to vote for someone who takes something away from them. The speeches that are given in the parliamentary sessions are to some extent political theatre where the winner is the person who has the best arguments in the sense of knowing what the public wants and articulates it to them candidly whether the argument itself is realistic or not. Then again not everyone buys this; Peris has spoken on many occasions how budgetary cuts are unfair in respect to the Aboriginal population, but many members of the audience might think that it is just a necessity. Consequently, she was able to strengthen her argument with additional factors:

Emergency departments are full of the victims of alcohol related violence. The costs of this are enormous. Such an enormous amount of our vital health resources is being spent dealing with a crisis that can be avoided. (Peris 2014/1.)

The main point in many of Peris' arguments is that the cuts made to front-line services are a wrong policy because they increase domestic violence, which is a moral evil in itself, partially caused by the state. She also has a very good budgetary argument to add on that. She argues that cuts in the front-line services are in fact increasing total costs because by increasing domestic and family violence, they also increase medical costs. Then again, Peris presents in her speeches no evidence about the effectiveness of front-line services in reducing domestic violence. Minister Scullion after all claimed that at least some of them would be ineffective. She says that they are vital but convincing the audience might be easier with more facts on her side.

Peris, nevertheless, argued also against policy decisions that had little relation with the public budget. For instance, she pointed out in one of her speeches why the Banned Drinker register (BDR) was “scrapped”:

The CLP said that the requirement for everyone to show ID was too great a burden -- having to show ID treated all Territorians like criminals (Peris 2013).

The acronym “CLP” in the quote refers to the Country Liberal Party, which at that time formed the government of Northern Territories. It is a conservative political party, which is active only in the Northern Territories (Country Liberals 2019). Peris’ comment here is ironical, as if showing the personal ID when buying alcohol would have been a too big burden for the Northern Territorians. Irony means stating something that is not true to draw attention to its implied lack of truth. It is a regular technique used to mock and ridicule others. She compares this burden to the amount of violence that could be prevented, and if the register is believed to be working, this would be a very compelling argument. So, it appears to be from the point of view of a researcher like me who lives in a country where showing the ID is always compulsive when buying alcohol, at least for young and young-looking persons. This might mean that my own way of seeing the matter is very different from that of the CLP government. For it the requirement might appear just another unnecessary form of government bureaucracy.

Another pre-agreement is the protection of human life and how it as a moral value surpasses everything else. In Peris’ point of view, it surpasses the value of equal treatment of all, which certainly is one of the main values in modern welfare states, but the BDR does not work on that basis. BDR does not allow selling alcohol to certain people, namely criminals who have a criminal record for example domestic violence. The BDR does not treat people equally, but Peris commented that it is all right. Protecting the lives of Aboriginal women is more important in this case than the just treatment of everyone.

Peris engages also in rather ordinary type of argumentation against the opposing party:

--Natasha Griggs promised to save the RAAF houses in Darwin. After the election, she announced that she won't be saving the RAAF houses. Before

the election, they promised no cuts to health and education. After the election, they are ripping \$80 billion out of health and education. Before the election, Tony Abbott promised to be the prime minister for Aboriginal Australians. After the election, he is slashing Indigenous affairs by half a billion dollars. --That is a pretty comprehensive list of promises broken—just in the first budget. (Peris 2014/3.)

Natasha Griggs is MP of a Liberal Party and before elections acted as a member of the House of Representatives Standing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee. Tony Abbott was at the time party leader of the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister, whose policies Peris criticized many times. The last pre-agreement in Peris' rhetoric is very common and often seen in media after elections when both the opposition and various commentators up to the common people criticize the government for all the promises it has broken after winning the elections. Peris has a few very good examples on how the government has not kept its promises. Her arguments seem credible.

The whole system of representative democracy is based on people voting those people to the Parliament who they trust to make the best decisions for them. This usually means a lot of speeches and promises before the elections. Breaking these promises and people's trust is universally and regularly condemned. This type of argument gives the opposition good tools to make the governments seem unworthy and unreliable, but on the other hand, because it is a recurring phenomenon, it may not be as effective as it looks like. In the case of Peris, this type of rhetoric is certainly connected with her attempt to advance the cause of the Aboriginals, but simultaneously she is also acting as a typical member of a party in the opposition. It can thus be classified among the pre-agreements. At the time of the speeches, Peris was a senator of the Labor Party that was that year in the opposition. That means that her role is to criticize the decisions of the government. This is the basic role of the opposition, because any political party after all aims to be in the decision-making role. That is the position where the party can affect significant changes in the society, while the opposition tries to inhibit decisions not favourable to it.

### **4.3 Other rhetorical ways**

Comparison is one of the most common rhetorical techniques. Nova Peris uses it to compare two towns, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek.

In the last year there were 496 cases of domestic violence in Tennant Creek. There were only 61 in Nhulunbuy. A dramatic difference, but why? Nhulunbuy still effectively has the BDR; Tennant Creek does not. ---. And in just the first 12 months since the BDR was scrapped domestic violence in Tennant Creek increased by 47 per cent. (Peris 2013.)

These towns are similar in size and population (Tennant Creek 2991 persons and Nhulunbuy 3240 persons in 2016, Australian Bureau of Statistic, 2016) but the main difference is that the other still has the Banned Drinker Register in force and the other one does not. She says that this is the reason why domestic violence is so much more common in Tennant Creek compared to Nhulunbuy. She does not present statistics for the whole Australia.

Notwithstanding the lack of total statistics on violence, comparing just these two towns gives her speech more credibility than just giving numbers from one town. If Peris had just said that there were 496 cases of Domestic violence in Tennant Creek, the audience could not have comprehended the extent of that amount. Then again, when it is being compared to 61 in Nhulunbuy, the amount is easier to understand. The audience can start wondering why there is such a huge difference in numbers and Peris has the explanation. It might not be the only possible explanation to the situation, but it is credible and the first one offered to them.

She offers facts and compares correctly two towns that are similar in size. Still, the audience has no way of knowing whether there are some other factors that make the other town more violent than the other. There could be for example a demographic difference that is part of the reason. It is clear from her argument that domestic violence was more common in Tennant Creek even when they had the BDR. She compares the situation before and after BDR in Tennant Creek, where violence had increased by 47 percent. If this was a scientific debate, it would have been important for the audience to hear about changes in the number of cases of domestic violence in Tennant Creek from a longer time period and receive also social, demographic and economic characterizations to remove the chances of



some other factors affecting the data. Nevertheless, a 47 percent increase is a quite alarming increase, and it would not be easy for another rhetor to convince the audience that removing BDR had meant absolutely no effect in the increase of violence in Tennant Creek.

This is by no means the only moment when Peris uses comparison in her speeches. She does that all the time by comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Comparison is an effective tool especially in a situation where Closing the gap is the main objective.

An Aboriginal woman is 80 times more likely than other Territorians to be admitted to hospital as a result of assault. (Peris 2014/2.)

I will say again: if you are an Aboriginal woman you are 80 times more likely to be hospitalised because of assault than any other Australian (Peris 2015/1).

Repetition is used to make the argument stronger and more memorable. Peris repeatedly emphasized and reminded her audience about the amount of violence that Aboriginal women suffer. “*80 times more likely to be hospitalized*” was mentioned many times in my material. These facts probably stuck with the audience because they are simple and short, but also because they raise emotions. Peris appeals to the emotions repeatedly in her speeches.

Come to Katherine and see bashed and bloodied women, or go to Tennant Creek and see the horrific levels of alcohol-fuelled violence in that town (Peris 2015/1).

Appealing to emotions is an effective rhetorical tool. Women and children suffering from violence is an emotional subject. Peris describes women as “bashed and bloodied” and that instantly creates disturbing images in the minds of the audience. Peris uses these words to create the feel of urgency. The point is that something bad is happening all the time and they have to act fast. Emotions also affect often the decisions that people make, sometimes without them even realizing it. Appealing to feelings happens also all the time in basic everyday life and that is what makes it easy and practical also in politics. People who are good at reading other people are very often also talented politicians. Politicians often use appealing to emotions when they might not have enough facts, or they simply want to make

their message more forceful. Feelings have a way of taking easy hold on people, even when there is not enough proof to the claim.

#### **4.4 Peris' Argumentation as Viewed Through Discourse Analysis**

With discourse analysis we can give new nuances to this interpretation. First, I analyse the cuts made by the government.

The Abbott government cut half a billion dollars from Aboriginal expenditure in the 2013–14 budget--- I know, because I speak to people every single day—to such an extent that many services will be forced to close. This government talks about closing the gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage on the one hand but withdraws crucial funding to frontline services with the other. (Peris 2015/2.)

Peris attempts in her speech to make the Government seem like a big organization trying to crush small individual people. Speakers often put forward arguments, persuade, criticize, hide and highlight things. (Jokinen et al. 2002, 128.) This means that all that they say, in making their point, might not be totally truthful or they try to make something sound like something it is not. Therefore, not everything they say should be taken directly as a fact. Peris talks in her speeches similarly to how she talks to people every day, which gives her credibility and trustworthiness. Then again, it is debatable how trustworthy all the information is. She does not mention at all what are the reasons for the cuts. She says that the Government is cutting and that it makes it worse for the people living there but this is only one perspective to the matter. In discourse analysis ”faktan konstruointi on yritys saada kuvaukset näyttämään kiistanalaisten väitteiden sijasta kiistämättömiltä tosiasioilta, jolloin sosiaalisen todellisuuden konstrukttiivinen luonne hämärtyy ja vaihtoehtoisen todellisuuden jäsenystavat vaientuvat”. (Jokinen et al. 2002, 129.) This is very common in politics, on both sides. Both the government and the opposition try to make people accept their perspective. Both can present facts that are true, but they are often shorthanded versions of reality. Peris is condemning the cuts and tries to keep the conversation on her version of the story: on people who suffer because of the cuts.

Peris is talking about socially and economically important decisions that have been made. She is convinced that cuts have been a bad policy. She also claims that the Government has lied to the people, because they have made promises about closing the gap, but now are doing exactly the opposite. On many occasions, she is claiming directly that indigenous people have been lied to.

“I refer to the \$1 million cut in federal funding to the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, commonly known as NAAJA, which has forced the closure of its office in East Arnhem Land. How is this cut consistent with the promise from the Minister for Indigenous Affairs that the \$½ billion cut to Indigenous programs in the government's first budget will not affect front-line services? (Peris 2014/4)

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) delivers legal services to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (2020). Paris claims that the Government has publicly announced that services do not need to be closed but it has happened anyway and uses NAAJA as an example. Paris is using discourse whereby people should be able to trust their elected representation; that those people do what they have promised. There is a public expectation how decision-makers are supposed to act and here they clearly were not complying.

Peris criticizes the Government repeatedly and strongly. Jokinen et al. writes that in discursive analysis people are positioning themselves for the situation: “Asemoituminen on aina sosiaalista toimintaa, tietynlaisen position ottamista julkisessa keskustelussa. -- Argumentaatioissa pyritään yleensä oman position puolustamiseen ja vahvistamiseen ja toisaalta vastaposition heikentämiseen ja kritisointiin”. (Jokinen et al. 2002, 127.) Dwelling on the ills caused by the Government is important in this.

If the PM wants to help Aboriginal people, why has he just cut 51 jobs in the MacDonnell shire? -- 30 jobs have been cut and there are no youth programs delivered there anymore. The small town of Elliott on the Stuart Highway—halfway between Darwin and Alice Springs—will lose two part-time childcare positions. So much for supporting parents and helping them to get their kids engaged in education! Jobs will be lost from the closure of the drug and alcohol

program run by Amity Community Services in Darwin. These are all front-line services. (Peris 2015/2.)

In her speech, she is attacking the Prime Minister. She is painting this picture, where he is fully responsible to the people for them losing their jobs. Again, she is not explaining whether cuts have been made for purely economic reasons or whether there are some other reasons which would be for example inefficacy of the services. She claims that the services are essential in reducing violence and it is the Prime Minister who is taking them away from the people. People are in general willing to protect what they have so losing a job or place in day-care is significant for them. Peris' position in this is to be the person who protects the people and what is theirs.

Peris aims with use of these arguments to the decision where cutting money from these services is cancelled, so that they could still access these services and continue living in small neighbourhoods in the countryside where they can be close to their culture and homelands. In larger cities the life of the Indigenous Australians might be even worse, as they often end up living in the outskirts of the cities, which end up resembling slums. Yet, living in the Northern Territories is full of obstacles:

It is important that the minimum wage is set at a level that reflects the rising cost of living in Australia. ---The Northern Territory's Council for Social Services' most recent report on the cost of living states that households who depend on remote stores for their shopping are spending more than one-third of their income on food and are paying nearly 50 per cent more on food than urban households. These members of the Territory community are some of the lowest income earners in the country. (Peris 2014/5.)

The Indigenous Australians do live in sparsely populated areas and that makes their living more expensive because they have to pay half as much for food compared to people living in urban households. Peris' focus is on family budgets, influenced strongly by the fact that members of the Territory community are some of the lowest income earners in the country compared to people living in bigger cities and wealthier areas, heightened by the corresponding fact that buying from remote stores is more expensive. She paints the picture how this situation is unfair to the Indigenous people and demands change to this.

Her solution is, however, quite curious. According to basic economic theory, if the salary levels would rise compared to the expenses, the remote stores could raise their prices even more. It also does not help people who for example are studying or living on a pension. It would probably be more efficient to try to lower the costs of getting the food to the remote areas and to support these remote stores. This way they could lower the costs at the same level as in other areas of Australia.

Nevertheless, she has a point: food should not be 50 percent more expensive in remote areas. But that is probably not the only reason why she wants to raise the minimum wage. This issue just gives her a good reason to bring raising wages as a solution to the table. In other words, she has brought up an issue and given it a somewhat simple solution. In her discourse, there is only this single solution and it would solve the issue. It is simple, but she leaves other solutions without reflection.

She claims in one of her speeches that closing these services, in this context she was talking about a program to keep young people out of prison, it will cost more to have these young people inside the prison than offer them these services. “The NAAJA office in East Arnhem Land keeps people out of our prison system and keeping someone out of prison costs so much less than keeping someone in prison”. (Peris 2014/4). Thinking of the whole Australia, an economically challenging situation is often the reason for the cuts. Peris does not take this up, or in other words, she stays clear from the government’s viewpoint. She simply points out that economically cuts are not a wise solution.

One of the main themes in Peris’ speeches is violence that Aboriginal women face in their everyday life and the biggest reason for this is misuse of alcohol. In her speeches, she repeatedly comes back to the Banned Drinker Register (BDR). It was a register, which was used to reduce violence by not allowing people, who had been sentenced for reasons of domestic violence, to buy alcohol. This meant that everyone had to show identification when buying alcohol. The meaning of this was to reduce the misuse of alcohol and also the violence caused by that:

There was one issue that all witnesses were unanimous about, and that was that the banned drinkers register was an extremely effective tool in reducing

alcohol related violence against women. Make no mistake, alcohol misuse is an enormous factor in family violence in the Northern Territory. --- In August 2012 the incoming Northern Territory government scrapped the banned drinkers register. It was one of its first acts as a new government, and it was totally irresponsible. (Peris 2015/3).

Peris does not usually tell the reason why the drinking register was banned, but it seems to be a matter of real importance to her. Since she is Indigenous Australian, who most likely has witnessed herself bad cases of domestic violence or at least heard a lot about them. Many of these problems that she presents to the audience are probably very personal to her. The audience can most likely sense the feelings, fears and hopes in her speeches. That is also why they are so effective.

In discourse analysis, it is also essential how the audience takes the given accounts. Our partners in interaction and our audience judge whether our actions and accounts are suitable. Thus, the whole process is always uncertain. (Jokinen et al. 2002, 31.) Here Peres has clearly a thought that telling the audience about the horrible and unjust situation of Indigenous Australian women makes them emotional and more open to her comments. Emotions are a good way in making people believe in you; it is hard to take anyone seriously if they do not seem passionate about it. Peres is expecting a reaction from the audience and clearly wishing support to her arguments. That is the only way to change things in the Territories; together. There might be some among her opponents in the audience who might feel at least a little bit bad for their decisions or their opinions may be faltering when they hear her speak. All her knowledge about how people might act is based on earlier interaction that she has had with her audience. (Jokinen et al. 2002, 31-32.) If she doesn't know them, she must trust that she knows how people are going to respond because of cultural reasons.

## **5. CONCLUSION: EVALUATING PERIS' ARGUMENTATION**

Peris is very open about problems that Indigenous Australians have, but even she does not want to bring up everything. Peris talks about problems the Indigenous Australians have in their society very openly, because they are widely known to almost everyone. What she does not do, is mention what Indigenous Australians should do themselves. Of course, history and their abuse has had a huge role in what is still happening in their communities, but they still seem quite resigned to their current situation. Her claim is that after everything that has happened in history, Indigenous Australians must be helped by the Government. This claim is also generally accepted in discussions of the Closing the gap target, so it is not hard to justify.

Indigenous Australians seem to have few people at the top of the Australian society who are fighting for their justice, and their voice is not very loud. That allows the majority to make decisions for them. Frederick Solt writes in his analysis “Economic Inequality and Democratic Political Engagement” that especially economic inequality depresses political interest. “The analyses demonstrate that economic inequality powerfully depresses political interest, discussion of politics, and participation in elections among all but the most affluent and that this negative effect increases with declining relative income”. (Solt 2008, 48.)

This means that the Indigenous Australians might not even have interest to affect their own situation. The case seems to be that they have been subjected for years and generations to deprivation after which they feel helpless to act independently. The fact that in Australia progress in their issues has been so slow compared to other Indigenous nations around the world means that something could be done better. If a substantial transformation in the whole Australian society and in the indigenous communities themselves is not happening nothing changes. Indigenous Australians keep staying poor and the gap just does not close between them and other Australians.

The change can be done also in people’s minds. If they believe that they can make a difference, they most likely try harder. Hannah Neumayer writes in her report (2013) that “It has been argued that community-led strategies founded in a concern for human rights can draw from and encourage positive cultural identities and in this way inform innovative and

dynamic approaches to ‘closing the gap’ in the Australian health landscape”. (Neumayer 2013, 49.)

Jeffrey Reitz and Rupa Banerjee write in their research about racial inequality in Canada that: “When diversity results in inequality, it may undermine the sense of fairness and inclusion among individuals and groups”. (Reitz & Banerjee 2007, 2.) Their observation is that Aboriginals stay rather in inclusion than experience inequality. This would also explain why Indigenous Australians might not want to cooperate with non- Indigenous Australians but want to stay in seclusion, especially thinking about racism and other things that non-Indigenous Australians have done to them in the past.

Nova Peris has some convincing arguments to back her demands. First, she wanted cuts on front-line services cancelled. She argued that the savings were taken from the wrong place and acted in contravention of the Close-the-gap objectives. She also said that they were not economically wise and ended up causing costs instead of savings. Inefficiency and additional costs do not make a credible policy.

The other one of her demands was to take the Banned Drinker register back to use. She used strong value-basis to back her arguments. These values, for example the right to live in safety without domestic violence, were convincing arguments since they are universally acknowledged. She also had evidence which quite convincingly showed that the Banned Drinker register actually made a difference. In truth, there was not enough time to know this for sure, but her claims were most likely enough to convince many in the audience.

The Close-the-gap-objectives are important for her argumentation. Peris knows that those objectives are something that the government has promised to work towards and that makes it a good option to rely on them. They obligate the Government to work towards a better and safer life for Australian Aboriginals. The pressure to achieve something is also high because progress in promoting indigenous peoples' wellbeing has been slower in Australia compared to the other countries with indigenous populations.

So, the question is whether she was convincing enough and were her arguments based on real facts and truth?



Using the BDR was an effective way to give an easy solution to a grand problem.

The two most courageous—and most effective (initiatives), I believe—were the mandatory reporting of domestic violence and the Banned Drinker Register, commonly known as the BDR (Peris 2013).

Peris had many good points about why it should be reintroduced to use, and her claims of its effectiveness were credible. The BDR was in use from May 2011 to August 2012. This means that it was “scrapped” a long time before any actual data and conclusions of its effectiveness could be gathered. The government claimed that it was ineffective, and Peris claimed that it worked. There is no way in telling whether it could have actually worked.

Some of the evaluations on the other hand had some good insight to the matter. One of the best statements on the subject was written by Vince Kelly, who was at the time the President of the Northern Territory Police Association. He wrote that from the perspective of police and many in the community, anti-social behaviour in and around bottle shops in Northern Territory cities and towns during the BDR was reduced and the normal “humberging” during the period was greatly decreased. He said that “The benefits far outweighed any disadvantage and inconvenience which the banned drinkers could point to”. (Kelly 2014.)

He also wrote that the weakness of the BDR was that the government of that time failed to apply adequate resources to the rehabilitation aspects of the policy. This means that it also failed to produce long time changes for the offenders on the register. (Kelly 2014.)

This is also what Malcolm Frost writes in his research. He argues that these offenders are at the same time also victims and they should be encouraged to come forward for assessment and treatment to change their behaviour instead of sending them to prison or punished in some other way. He compared them to HIV-patients: if Australia had persecuted those patients, the spread of infection could have been way worse. (Frost 2014, 97.)

In Peris’ speeches, she only talks about victims when the offenders should also be seen as victims who need services and help to counter their issues with alcoholism and violence. Basically, all offenders had been victims of violence at some point in their youth that had

caused psychological responses that led them to act violently towards other people. Then again, it might not be rhetorically wise to try to explain why violent criminals are at the same time also victims. Some might see it as offending towards assaulted women and other victims and some might just harbour so many bad feelings towards offenders that it might not work at all. According to Peris, the guilty party is the government, which does not allocate sufficient resources to prevention of violence.

Then again, this leads also to the other point in her speeches. The cuts she criticized were on the services that provided help to the victims of the domestic and family violence. No one can deny that those services are necessary and needed but there was very little attention to those services that the offenders needed. If there is a way to reduce domestic violence, the long-term solution is not just to provide services for the victims, but also try to stop the violent behaviour itself. This also prevents children from being exposed to so much violence and then breaking the circle of violence might be achieved at some point. That would have been a very effective solution which she did not use. Then again, it might not work well for her to try to justify why the services for the criminals need more resources when there are not even enough resources for the services helping domestic violence victims as it is.

In her speeches, Peris also supported mandatory reporting that demands people to report to the authorities all the violence that they witness. I already gave in the introduction one example how the reporting is a dysfunctional solution in Aboriginal communities because of their punitive ways. Jane Lloyd writes in her research that the acceptance of violence as something normal and inevitable by family and the whole community indicates that the system cannot depend on reporting and victim disclosures alone to drive the response to this violence (Lloyd 2014, 103). As mentioned before, cooperation between officials and aboriginals would be crucial in creating these policies. Then again, problems seemed to be in the communication so with those problems fixed, mandatory reporting might be an effective solution that would also give a strong signal that violence is not accepted.

Frost also argues that a firm and consistent response to culture of vengeance must be applied (Frost 2014, 97). Interventions that are used to reduce the violence are often powerless, because the punitive culture that dominates the Aboriginal communities. This brings us to the last stumbling block in Nova Peris' speeches. The responsibility of

Australian Aboriginals themselves. Peris is laying all the responsibility to fix all the issues in Australian Aboriginal communities to the government. This might make the audience ask what about the people themselves in the Aboriginal communities.

Dr. Rogers described in her interview factors that contribute to the level of silence regarding domestic violence in Aboriginal cultures. One of the reasons was that Aboriginal people choose not to take responsibility for their own actions. When something horrible is happening, they turn the blind eye. Jane Lloyd describes the behaviour of witnesses in one of the murder cases like this:

The court also heard that several witnesses in the Djana case made some attempt to intervene when Djana began his brutal assault but then left the scene and did not call or seek any outside help despite their awareness of the likelihood that Djana would seriously harm, if not kill, his wife. --- A witness gave evidence that Djana had told her in the presence of Ms Norman several hours before Ms Norman died that he was going to be a murderer that day. (Lloyd 2014, 105.)

The choices that Aboriginals make do matter. They might be caused by fear of getting abused by someone in the society when doing the right thing, but they are still choices that let the society continue their violent, punitive ways. Only a small part of assaults is being reported to the authorities and that also falsifies the magnitude of the problem.

Most important of the Peris' demands was to cancel the cuts made to the services that were helping Indigenous Australians to get back on their feet. Then again, based on the articles that I wrote about earlier in this thesis, the government solutions had not been effective in closing the gap. So, at the same time as the services are closing, it seems that solutions are not making any progress in fixing the problem and money was reallocated to some other services. The Government blamed inefficient services, but Peris claimed that the services were vital in preventing violence. Based on the articles and speeches that I examined in this thesis<sup>8</sup>, it would seem that the services are necessary but efficiency, cooperation with Aboriginals and individual approaches has to be taken in the account. In any case, situation in Northern Territory seems very alarming and shows that Peris is not wrong in having concern in the situation of the Aboriginals.

Peris brings out significant concerns and relies on appealing to the feelings of the audience which appears effective. Her pre-agreements seem suitable and they are directed to the right audience. She also has good arguments and facts and manages to add credibility and trustworthiness with them to her speeches. Then again, she uses very common opposition rhetoric and strongly criticizes the government, which may lose its effectiveness in a longer run. Also, conclusions that she makes based on the facts are not necessarily true in terms of results. In the end, her conclusions are different from the Government's and there is no knowing for sure which one the audience is going to believe.

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