

# Indigenous MAKE ^ POVERTY HISTORY.

## Campaign update

19th September

Dear Friends,

Last week it was twelve months since the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Rights was adopted. The former Australian Government would not sign it and had actively opposed its adoption. Now, twelve months later, and with a new Government, Australia still does not formally support the declaration. As we say in our media statement below if the current Government is serious about its commitment to Indigenous rights then they must urgently support and ratify the Declaration. This is no symbolic action; ratification does give Indigenous Peoples and States a framework and a tool to use to ensure meaningful and appropriate engagement and partnerships.

Nowhere is the need for meaningful and appropriate engagement more apparent than in the Northern Territory Intervention. Now more than a year later since its implementation we know what we all suspected that it was a hastily cobbled together policy. In recent months there has been a review of the Intervention with the report due out on September 30th. We are all eager to see what it says, however, many organizations and individuals have been working hard to ensure that we hear about what is happening in the NT. Much of what is being publicly acknowledged comes from the submissions into the review. Without wanting to duplicate others efforts, we thought it was worth highlighting some of the comments that have been made by key organizations. Therefore, in this newsletter we have presented some of the key points made.

NATSIEC will attend the rally so that we can meet with people and hear first hand how they have been affected and we will continue to take advice from those most affected on the actions that should be taken.

Of particular concern to us is that amongst all the debate on the Intervention often missed is the fact that it has failed to address the recommendations made in the Little Children are Sacred report, which supposedly was the catalyst to action. So while we take action on what has happened since 2007, let's not forget what has not happened and continue to pressure the Federal and NT Governments to address the many recommendations contained in the Little Children are Sacred.

### NATSIEC MEDIA: You've Said Sorry, Now Ratify the Declaration

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) today called on the Federal Government to unequivocally declare its support for the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people.

### Converge on the Centre

On Tuesday 30th September the R Intervention group have organised Convergence on the Centre to coincide with the release of the Intervention report.

12pm Tuesday 30 th September at Courthouse Lawns, Alice Springs.

NATSIEC will attend the rally and will be mentioned in this newsletter.

There are other events planned before and after including a "listening tour". If you need more details contact <http://rollbacktheintervention.org>

### Comment from the NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

"The incidence of child abuse in our communities will not diminish until disadvantage - especially in the areas of health, housing and education - is removed. This will happen when remote communities receive their fair share of resource cake over the long term. This has never happened to our eternal shame" - Tony Fitzgerald, NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, June 2008.

### Intervention increases murder rates

The number of murder cases in the Northern Territory has

"In February this year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were impressed with the leadership shown by Prime Minister Rudd in making the longed for Apology. Now though we are questioning why the Government has yet to ratify the Declaration despite their rhetoric about Indigenous Rights" said Mr Graeme Mundine, Executive Secretary of NATSIEC.

"Supporting the Declaration is not a symbolic act; it provides a framework for establishing meaningful partnerships and ensuring equality and non-discrimination. The Declaration affirms the unique contribution the diverse cultures of Indigenous peoples bring to the world and ensures that justice, respect and democracy are enjoyed by Indigenous peoples" said Mr Mundine.

"The Government should not hesitate to support this Declaration as it contains no new rights. It simply elaborates on existing International human rights and applies them specifically to Indigenous peoples".

"Mr Rudd has shown he is committed to addressing the injustice, marginalization, poverty and exclusion experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and signing this Declaration would be a significant and tangible sign of that commitment which would result in practical outcomes for Indigenous peoples."

NATSIEC urges the Federal Government to explicitly show its support for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to ensure that its principles are entrenched within our domestic law and the policies and procedures of Governments.  
17/09/2008

## Central Land Council Survey

The Central Land Council (CLC) undertook research into the Government's emergency response in the NT to inform their submission to the evaluation. Their findings highlight the range of issues and that the intervention has both support and lack of support within communities. This underlines the fact that a one size fits all approach does not work.

Some of the results of the CLC survey were:

- About half the respondents (51%) were in support of income management, with 46% opposed. However, people on a wage were most in favour of the income management.
- People found that there was improved stock in the community stores since the intervention, but that prices had also increased.
- None of the surveyed communities had seen an increase in police since the intervention was introduced, but also 75% of respondents said they were happy with the number of police. The exception was Titjikala which does not have a permanent police presence, 60 % of people there desired an increase.
- 57 % of people felt there was less alcohol consumed in their community.
- 86 % said they need better housing.
- 85% are opposed to five year leases.
- 94 % were opposed to changes in the permit system.
- In four of the communities the majority did not know the government business manager.

dramatically increased according to the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA). This is because people have moved from dry camps to places such as Darwin to obtain alcohol. According to the NAAJA once people move away they are more stressed and isolated and likely to be involved in violence (ABC news 05/09/08). The principal lawyer at NAAJA, Glen Dooley says that there had been a run of killings since April this year, and whereas normally they would have 6 killings a year to represent, at this rate it would be 20 or more. Mr Dooley says that in his 17 years of working in Aboriginal legal aid, the rate of murders since the intervention began has been unprecedented. Mr Dooley also noted that it was "bizarre" that his organization, which gained increased funding as a result of the intervention, is now spending that money on helping people cope with the intervention (The Australian, Sept 05 2008).

### Quick Links

[Introduction to the campaign Resources](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

### MIPH wristbands

Don't forget to show your support for the campaign by wearing an MIPH wristband. Order through the

Overall people expressed support where the measures were service based and brought benefits and focus to communities. But there were reservations about those measures which challenged the autonomy of a community.

website:  
[www.makeindigenospovertyhistory.org](http://www.makeindigenospovertyhistory.org) or email  
[natsiec@ncca.org.au](mailto:natsiec@ncca.org.au)

Like others, this survey found that the intervention did not take into account the differences in communities. That where good governance structures existed they were ignored or even undermined and finally questions were raised about what improvements had been made to child safety and education.

<http://www.clc.org.au/media/releases/2008/Interventionsurvey.asp>

### **Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc (SNAICC)**

Some comments from SNAICC's submission to the Intervention review:

"Our discussion with services and communities across the NT over the past year suggests that the coordination, planning and effective management of measures that aim to improve child and family well-being is lacking".

"SNAICC's observation and analysis of the situation in the Northern Territory over the past year is that the Northern Territory still has the least responsive child protection system [in Australia]. The system has severe capacity constraints, remains too centralized and remote from Aboriginal communities and families in the process of service reform and service delivery.

"The divisive nature of the intervention has set back efforts to build policy dialogue between governments and communities on how best to secure the well being of children and protect those at risk. It has fueled negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people, particularly Aboriginal men, and it has stripped away dignity from Aboriginal people through compulsory income management models that assume Aboriginal people are not willing to feed, cloth and care for their own children. It has created and added service and program complexity absorbing significant public resources in administration that might otherwise have been available for direct provision. Current funding measures remain short term and were developed with little time for the rigor and community input that is a precursor to effective social and economic policy".

<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/uploads/rsfil/00206.pdf>

### **Indigenous Doctors call for a healing approach to address community issues**

*It is taking away our self management and autonomy, disempowering us. People are feeling pain in their hearts. There seems to be nowhere to go and all the roads seem to be blocked no matter which way we turn (quote in submission).*

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association in its

submission to the review called for a healing approach to address community issues. This approach includes practices and programs that may fall outside the health sector such as family reunion services, art and cultural practices and memorial and ceremonial practices.

AIDA considers that the Intervention has had a negative effect on the health, social and emotional wellbeing of communities, families and individuals. Their research shows that people have felt disempowered by the discriminatory nature of the NTER and the disregard for the principles of self determination. There has also been a negative effect on culture and social structures.

The AIDA welcomed additional funding for health checks but also state that the funding could have been used more effectively and that they have largely been an exercise in duplication.

With regard to income management, the AIDA have collected evidence which suggested that income management has made life very difficult for many people and that some people have experienced extreme hunger as a result. There is also a lot of distrust about the income management. As one person said

*all my money goes into income management. I got angry. Maybe you trying to rob me. It made me very angry.*

The AIDA goes on to make several comments and suggestions for ways forward.

In summary the AIDA believes that in addition to good governance and evidence based policy that ways of working must be underscored by genuine partnership in the spirit of cultural respect and collaboration.

### **Christ and Culture Conference February 2009**

For those of you interested in Indigenous theology and spirituality we would like to invite you to the the NATSIEC Christ and Culture Conference to be held in Ballina, NSW, in 2009.

Details can be found at

<http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/conference2009>

This campaign is all about getting involved and supporting initiatives that work. If you know about local programs and ideas that are making a difference please let us know. Also, don't forget to tell us about activities that you organise to support the campaign, we'll post it on the website to inspire others.

Sincerely,  
NATSIEC

email: [natsiec@ncca.org.au](mailto:natsiec@ncca.org.au)

- [www.makeindigenouspovertyhistory.org.au](http://www.makeindigenouspovertyhistory.org.au)

The **Make Indigenous Poverty History** campaign is



an initiative of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) which is a commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

---

[Forward email](#)

✉ **SafeUnsubscribe®**

This email was sent to grussell@ncca.org.au by [grussell@ncca.org.au](mailto:grussell@ncca.org.au).  
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Email Marketing by



NATSIEC | Locked Bag 199 | Sydney | NSW | 1230 | Australia