



Indigenous MAKE POVERTY HISTORY.

NATSIEC Newsletter

30th November 2009

In This Issue

Changes to the NTER
Senate Inquiry Details
Will They Be Heard? Report
From the news wire...
2009 Martung Upah Appeal



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

Changes to the NTER

NATSIEC has created a space on its website to identify key documents and relevant links to sources of information relating to the recently introduced legislation. We will update it as necessary.

[Click here to go to the NTER page.](#)

Quick Links...

To see an online version of this newsletter and archived copies of previous newsletters [click here.](#)

[NATSIEC Website](#)

Share this newsletter on Facebook or twitter - click on the button at the bottom of the email.



Become a fan of NATSIEC on our Facebook page to keep

Changes to the Intervention Announced

Last week the long awaited legislation to reintroduce the RDA was unveiled. The Government announced that it will not only keep the income management system (with some exclusions) extend it to all welfare recipients in the Northern Territory with the intention of eventually extending the system across Australia to areas that are identified as disadvantaged.

Other aspects of the Intervention, such as alcohol and pornography prohibitions and five to stay as Special Measures.

The Bills containing these changes have been referred to the Senate Community Affairs inquiry. The Committee has called for submissions which are due by 1/02/2010 and it will report by 9/03/2010.

We urge you to make a submission to the inquiry. Terms of reference and contact details are available on the inquiry website.

NATSIEC will in due course make a submission. Some of the areas that we are particularly concerned about, and will be asking the Senators to consider are:

- * Whether the welfare reforms will have a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they are the most disadvantaged group in Australia. Therefore, while the Government aims to remove the discriminatory nature (based on race) of income management, in practice the changes will have the greatest impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- * Whether there is conclusive evidence that this sort of punitive strategy is the best way to address the issues that people face, or whether there are proven strategies that are more empowering and effective. Several welfare agencies and groups are urging caution and disputing the validity of such a strategy.

- * How will the changes be implemented to avoid the kind of confusion and humiliation encountered during the roll out of the existing income management system?

- * Whether the Government's consultations are proper evidence to support either income management or any of the identified Special Measures. In particular, we are concerned that the consultations were not properly prescribed by Government and informed by their own discussion paper for the Northern Territory Intervention. We question whether these consultations were a genuine opportunity for Communities to identify their own issues and solutions to those issues.

Senate Inquiry Details.

As mentioned above, the Bills to reintroduce the RDA as well as to make changes to the Welfare System were tabled in Parliament last week. They were referred to the Community Affairs Committee. The Committee will receive submissions until the 1/02/2010.

Inquiry into Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform and Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009 and the Families, Housing, Community Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2009 Measures) Bill 2009 along with the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009

This information is taken from the Committee webpage

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/soc_sec_welfare_reform_racial_discrimination_act_bill_2009
You can link to the Bills from that page.

Reason for referral of the Bills and information relating to the reference

On 26 November 2009 the Senate, on the recommendation of the Selection of Bills Committee

up to date with relevant information and NATSIEC's work.

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

the provisions of the above Bills to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry on 9 March 2010.

The Committee invites you to provide a written submission addressing issues that may be relevant to you. The submission should be lodged by 1 February 2010. The Committee prefers to receive submissions electronically as an attached document - email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au - or by mail (02 6277 5829).

Should you require further information please contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 5829. **Statement of reasons for referral of the Bills**

These are significant reforms to welfare policy which will affect a large number of disadvantaged Australians around which there has been significant community interest.

Assess the effectiveness of the amendments proposed in the Bills to:

- * improve the social and economic conditions, social inclusion and life outcomes of all individuals and communities affected by the measures, including but not limited to the delivery of measurable improvements in protecting women and children, reducing alcohol-related harm, improving nutrition and food security, promoting community engagement and strengthening the cultural sense of value in all affected communities, including but not limited to Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory;

- * reinstate the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and deliver on our international commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in the operation of relevant legislation, particularly the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007;

- * Assess the evidence that the proposed measures will deliver their stated policy objectives in an appropriate and cost effective manner.

- * Consider the relative merits of alternative measures in achieving these outcomes.

- * Assess the likely direct and incidental costs of the proposed measures including:

- * the cost of administration and delivery of the measures;
- * additional costs incurred by those subject to the measures;
- * the costs incurred by businesses complying with the Basics Card and potential losses of revenue excluded from the scheme.

In addition to the above in relation to the three Bills referred, the following issues for consideration are also provided in relation to the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform) Bill 2009 - Reinstatement of Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009 -

Assess the effectiveness of the amendments proposed in the Bill in meeting the Government's objectives to:

- * address the social and economic disengagement arising from long term welfare disadvantage in disadvantaged regions, and in particular across the whole of the Northern Territory;
- * improve the engagement, participation and responsibility of certain welfare recipients;
- * continue and strengthen the measures to protect women and children, including measures to reduce related harm, improve food security, ensure appropriately secure tenure for the delivery of government services, promote personal responsibility and rebuild community non-Indigenous communities; and
- * reinstate the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA) in the operation of relevant legislation, particularly the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007.

For further information, contact:
 Committee Secretary
 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
 PO Box 6100
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600
 Australia
 Phone: +61 2 6277 3515

Fax: +61 2 6277 5829
 Email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Will They Be Heard ?

Prior to tabling the Bills, the Government also released its report about its consultations: Intervention. In this report the Government presented its interpretations of the meeting to the Intervention. Additionally, the Government published an independent report it has scrutinise the actual consultation process.

On the same day another report was released which provided an independent analyses of consultations. This report called *Will They Be Heard?* was authored by the Hon Alastair H Professor Larissa Behrendt and others in conjunction with the group "concerned Australians" provides some analyses of the consultation process, based on three case studies. Importantly, it filmed the meetings and then provided the transcriptions, which allow a clearer assessment of the process.

All of these reports can be accessed via our website - [click here](#)

From the news wire...

26/11/09 - Australian Association of Social Workers - INCOME MANAGEMENT PLAN DOES NOT SUPPORT LOW INCOME AUSTRALIANS (FED)

The AASW is concerned that the Federal Government's plans to roll out income management in the Northern Territory will stigmatise low income households and have unintended punitive consequences for children and families. Social workers warmly welcome the re-instatement of the Racial Discrimination Act in the Northern Territory, but are concerned there is no evidence to warrant an extensive income management. The measures are an untested tool to address problems sometimes faced by low income households, such as alcohol and drug usage, and will do nothing to address the lack of training and education places for those seeking work, particularly in rural and remote parts of Australia. National President Professor Bob Lonnie. This crudely fashioned measure could lead many people to be fearful of seeking income and other support from Centrelink and other welfare services. It could therefore impact negatively on the children it is seeking to help.

26/11/09 - Law Council - REINSTATEMENT OF THE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT A WELCOME (FED)

The Law Council says the introduction of legislation to reinstate the Racial Discrimination Act means Aboriginal people can once again look forward to protection from racial discrimination. Law Council President John Corcoran said, "The restoration of fundamental rights of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory is long overdue. This announcement is an important step forward in ensuring the NT Intervention meets Australia's international obligations."

26/11/09 - Central Land Council - NTER STILL DISCRIMINATORY (NT)

At a meeting of its 90 members in Tennant Creek today, the Central Land Council said the Federal Government had squandered a valuable opportunity to reset the relationship with Aboriginal people. Members said that the Federal Government's application of the Racial Discrimination Act and Northern Territory Emergency Response legislation still ignores Aboriginal people's interests and that the measures remain discriminatory. CLC director David Ross said that he felt deeply disappointed by the Government.

26/11/09 Anglicare Victoria - CHANGES TO NT RESPONSE A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Anglicare Victoria today welcomed the Federal Government decision to repeal income management measures imposed on Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory and replace them with mainstream measures to manage welfare and family payment spending on essentials such as housing. Anglicare Victoria CEO Dr Ray Cleary said the new measures showed a more realistic and sustainable strategy to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable members of the community. He said the Federal Government has responded to the community's call for consultation and has developed measures to address issues of disadvantage that recognises the complexity of the situation and the needs of different communities across the Territory."

25/11/09 Reconciliation Australia - SUCCESS OF NEW NTER FRAMEWORK DEPENDS ON

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (FED)

Reconciliation Australia welcomed the introduction of amendments to legislation under Government action in the Northern Territory so that it complies with Australia's anti-rac laws. The new approach reflects the reality that social problems are not determined by Mark Leibler said the priority now was to determine how to implement the changes in a likely to succeed. "The language in the Bill and explanatory documents reflects an under success of programs aimed at alleviating disadvantage hinges on the ongoing involvement ground, he said. The changes also go some way towards recognising that policy needs to allow for different approaches put forward by different communities.

25/11/09 - Catholic Social Services Australia - CSSA CAUTIONS AGAINST NEW QUARAN ARRANGEMENTS (FED)

Welcoming the re-instatement of the Racial Discrimination Act, Catholic Social Services cautioned against applying untried policies across the population, particularly in the abs and services that are known to be effective. Executive Director, Frank Quinlan said the this morning will do little to resolve the issues currently facing some of the most disadv Australians.

25/11/09 - HENDERSON WELCOMES KEY INTERVENTION REFORMS (NT)

The Chief Minister Paul Henderson welcomed the Federal Government's package to strer the Northern Territory Emergency Response measures. The Northern Territory Governm consistently said the key to the success of the Intervention would come through strong c engagement. Mr Henderson said really targeting income management measures to behav school attendance rather than using race as the focus is important. He also welcomed th the Northern Territory's Anti Discrimination laws.

25/11/09 - ACWA SCEPTICAL ABOUT EFFECTIVENESS OF WELFARE QUARANTINING (FE

The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) says welfare quarantining cannot solution to protecting marginalised children, families and individuals already entrenched CEO Andrew McCallum said he is not convinced that proposed new income management today by Families Minister Jenny Macklin will assist those struggling to escape the cycle dependence. Under the reforms, to be rolled out from July next year, welfare recipient half their payments quarantined for spending on essential items such as food, rent and c

25/11/09 Australian Council of Social Services - ROLLOUT OF BLANKET INCOME MANA AND UN-AUSTRALIAN (FED)

ACOSS has raised concerns about the Federal Government's plans to roll out income mar the country, saying it could further disadvantage low income Australians. "While the reir Racial Discrimination Act is welcome step, it comes at a cost," said Clare Martin, CEO, A of Social Service. "These are major reforms to our welfare system and we are concernec evidence to warrant an extension of income quarantining. Blanket income management instrument which does not consider individual circumstances. We need individual solutic problems and we urge caution on a national rollout.

25/11/09 - National Rights Welfare Rights Network - PLAN TO CONTROL SPENDING OF "DRACONIAN, DISEMPOWERING AND DOWN-RIGHT DANGEROUS" (FED)

Reports in all of the major papers that the Federal Government has plans for a massive conditions for receiving Centrelink payments, with half of all payments to be only availa Card type scheme that operates in the Northern Territory (NT) has been branded "disem down-right dangerous", said Kate Beaumont, President of the National Welfare Rights Ne today. These measures are draconian, paternalistic and extreme. The Government's mov NTER compliant with the Racial Discrimination Act will see the blanket income managen replaced with another flawed scheme. The proposed broad 'triggered' based scheme will many people in the NT will remain under income management without justification.

25/11/09 - ANGLICARE SYDNEY CONCERNED ABOUT WELFARE PAYMENT MANAGEMEN

ANGLICARE Sydney has responded cautiously to the commitment from the Minister for Fi Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin to breaking the cycle of pover exclusion experienced by many on welfare payments. ANGLICARE Sydney CEO Peter Kell proposing the extension of the scheme to manage the welfare payments of recipients wi disadvantage might go some way to addressing the challenges they face, but needs to bi

evaluated.

25/11/09 - Human Rights Commission - REINSTATING THE RDA IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY WELCOMED (FED)

The Australian Human Rights Commission has welcomed today's announcement by the Australian Government that it will reinstate the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) in the Northern Territory. Race Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, said the proposal to progressively lift the RDA and anti-discrimination laws in the Northern Territory and Queensland was essential to be able to comply with its human rights obligations and ensure that people were not protected from discrimination on the basis of their race.

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank TEAR Australia for the free subscription to this service. <http://www.tear.org.au/>

2009 Martung Upah Appeal

The logo for the Martung Upah Appeal features the words "martung upah appeal" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is set against a background of horizontal stripes in red, black, yellow, and green.

The Make *Indigenous Poverty* History Campaign is an initiative of the National Aboriginal Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC). Other projects run by NATSIEC include the *Indigenous Poverty* project and a development fund.

NATSIEC receives significant funding from *Act of Peace* and the *Uniting Church (NSW)*; however the rest of our funding comes from donations by Churches and Individuals to its Martung Upah*.

By supporting the Martung Upah appeal you are joining us in a partnership to engage the wider community in fostering a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Together we can work towards healing the hurts of the past and building a better future for all our children so that injustice and discrimination will not be part of Australia's future.

We thank you for your support.

To download go to the Martung Upah Appeal webpage [click here](#).
To go direct to the online donation page [click here](#)

* Martung Upah is from Western Australia and means partnership.

Email Marketing by

