



## Indigenous MAKE POVERTY HISTORY.

### NATSIEC Newsletter

16th October 2009

#### In This Issue

Are you on the bus?  
Bilingual education in the NT  
Support Indigenous Youth to  
attend Taize  
From the news wire...  
2009 Martung Upah Appeal

#### Recent statements from Churches on the NT Intervention

##### Council of Churches WA

##### Statement on Reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act NT 9th October 2009



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).

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The Executive of the Council of Churches of Western Australia (CCWA) welcomes the move of the Federal Government to reinstate of the Racial Discrimination Act in the Northern Territory, and calls for the Federal Government to go further to review all Aboriginal policies to ensure that they are in line with Australia's international obligations, especially those now involved with the Northern Territory Intervention.

UN Special Rapporteur Professor James Anaya has pointed out that the Northern Territory Intervention, in its current form and in its delivery, "is incompatible with Australia's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Australia is a party to both treaties.

The intervention is also incompatible with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Australia supports". The CCWA Executive represents many Christian churches in Western Australia, whose gospel values encourage us to treat all people with equity and justice.

We acknowledge the goodwill of governments in attempting to address decades of neglect in the areas of Aboriginal policy, planning and service delivery. However, we believe it is the duty and responsibility of government to ensure that legislation, policies and actions comply in all respects with international treaties and obligations to which Australia is signatory or for which it has declared its support.

Furthermore, the Executive of the CCWA calls on governments to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal peoples, in a way that respects and recognizes the differing needs of each community. We uphold the right, and necessity, of Aboriginal people to be directly involved in the development and decision-making processes that lead to the development of services and policies that will affect their lives.

The Executive of the Council of Churches of WA calls upon Prime Minister Rudd to ensure that Professor Anaya's report will be viewed as a valuable contribution to expert policy advice.

Council of Churches WA website <http://www.churcheswa.com.au/>

##### Victorian Council of Churches

The Executive of the Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) calls upon the Federal Government to take the opportunity provided by the reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act to review all Aboriginal policies to ensure that they are in line with Australia's international obligations.

UN Special Rapporteur Professor James Anaya has pointed out that the Northern Territory Intervention, in its current form and in its delivery, "is incompatible with Australia's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Australia is a party to both treaties. The intervention is also incompatible with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Australia supports".

The VCC Executive could draft an alternative set of principles to guide our statement based on the Gospel to which we bear witness. However, we join Prof Anaya in drawing attention to commitments made by successive Australian Governments to those principles articulated in UN Treaties.

The Executive of the VCC acknowledges the goodwill of governments in attempting to address decades of neglect in the areas of Aboriginal policy, planning and service delivery. However, the VCC also believes it is the duty and responsibility of government to ensure that legislation, policies and actions comply in all respects with obligations to which Australia is signatory or for which it has declared its support.

Furthermore, the Executive of the VCC calls on governments to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal peoples, in a way that respects and recognises the differing needs of each community. We uphold the right, and necessity, of Aboriginal people to be directly involved in the development and decision-making processes that lead to the development of services and policies that will affect their lives.

The Executive of the Victorian Council of Churches calls upon Prime Minister Rudd to ensure that Professor Anaya's report will be viewed as a valuable contribution to expert policy advice.

As a nation Australia is being called upon to make changes to Aboriginal policy in line with accepted world principles. The world will judge us by our preparedness to act.

Victorian Council of Churches website <http://www.vcc.org.au/>

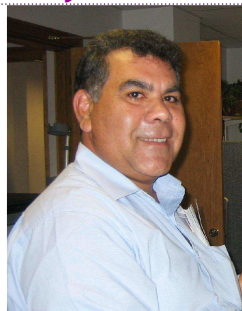
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### Background

[Professor Anaya's speech can be downloaded here](#)

NATSIEC made a written submission to the Special Rapporteur raising our concerns about the NT Intervention. We also released a statement supporting Anaya's findings. Both these statements can be [downloaded from our website](#).

### Are you on the bus?



Graeme Mundine, Executive Secretary of NATSIEC, recently delivered a speech to the United Faculty of Theology. Borrowing an analogy from 'practical black theologian' Dr Anthony G. Reddie, Graeme explained that he sees the bus analogy as a useful tool to help us explore our relationship with Church and with each other. He also said that the image resonates with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they grapple with the decision of whether to get on the bus. To read the full speech [click here](#).

### Latest Reports

Bilingual education in the Northern Territory has long been a controversial issue, no more so than in the past year when significant changes and statements have been made to NT Indigenous language and education policies. Much of the public debate has been ill-informed and generated mis-information and confusion. AIATSIS have recently released an informative discussion paper which helps cut through the myths and explains the history and background to bilingual education. It analyses the current policy debates and presents information about some of the facts. The discussion paper is a helpful contribution and certainly addresses some of the issues and fallacies that we have encountered during our lobbying efforts.

*Gaps in Australia's Indigenous Language Policy: Dismantling bilingual education in the Northern Territory* by Jane Simpson, Jo Caffery and Patrick McConvell is available from the [AIATSIS website](#).

### Can you help send Indigenous youth to participate in an International ecumenical youth gathering?

In February 2010, NATSIEC is supporting three Indigenous youth to attend a youth meeting organised by Taizé. We want to raise \$5,000 to cover the cost of enabling their participation in this worthwhile event.

[Click here to make a secure online donation.](#)

#### Pilgrimage of trust in the Philippines

The meeting in Manila in February 2010 will be a new stage in the "Pilgrimage of trust on earth", begun by Taizé's founder, the late Brother Roger. This will be the fifth meeting of its kind in Asia, following meetings organized by Taizé in Chennai (Madras), India, in 1985 and 1988, Manila, Philippines in 1991, and Kolkata, India in 2006.

The pilgrimage has as a general theme "inner life and human solidarity". The aim of the meeting is to support young people in their search for God and in their desire to commit themselves in the Church and society. Trust, peace, and reconciliation will be central themes of the upcoming meeting.

The daily program will consist of prayer together and sharing: in the mornings, in the parishes and religious communities of Metro Manila, and from midday onwards all together in a central place. Participants will be accommodated in families, local parishes, and religious communities.

#### From the news wire...

##### 14th October 2009 - NEW RESOURCE FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ADVOCATES (FED)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the country will be able to learn more about their human rights as well as their rights as Indigenous peoples and how best to use them to help their communities, with the launch of a new practical guide. The guide, 'Free and Equal' has been produced by Oxfam Australia and the Diplomacy Training Program. The aim of the guide was to provide a practical resource for Indigenous community advocates to learn more about their rights, and the responsibilities of Australian governments and officials to respect, protect and fulfill these rights. People can request copies of "Free and Equal" by contacting Natasha Newman at Oxfam Australia on 03 9289 9372 or email [natashan@oxfam.org.au](mailto:natashan@oxfam.org.au)

##### 8th October 2009 - RELEASE OF THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONSULTATION REPORT (FED)

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, released the report of the National Human Rights Consultation Committee. In December 2008 the Rudd Government asked the Committee to conduct a nationwide Consultation to examine the protection and promotion of human rights and responsibilities in Australia. The report contains 31 recommendations and provides important information about what we do well and assesses options for addressing the areas where we can do better. Overwhelmingly, the report finds that Australians support the protection of human rights. They also, however, believe more can be done.

#### **8th October 2009 - SOME IMPROVEMENTS SEEN IN INDIGENOUS HOUSING BUT STILL MORE TO BE DONE (FED)**

A report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that although levels of overcrowding and access to essential services, such as power, water and sewerage improved for Indigenous Australian households during the period 2001-2006, homelessness and affordability levels remained about the same, and the overall condition of dwellings deteriorated. The report Indigenous housing needs 2009: a multi-measure needs model presents a model of Indigenous housing need based on AIHW analysis of data from the 2006 Census, the ABS Community Housing Infrastructure and Needs Survey, and the Commonwealth Rent Assistance program. It estimates that around 10,000 additional dwellings were required in 2006 to address Indigenous housing need, including homelessness, affordability, access to essential services, dwelling condition, and notably, to reduce overcrowding.

#### **7th October 2009 - WHY ARE INDIGENOUS IMPRISONMENT RATES RISING? (NSW)**

New research by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has shown that between 2001 and 2008 the adult Indigenous imprisonment rate rose by 37 percent in Australia and 48 percent in New South Wales. Over the same period the non-Indigenous rate of imprisonment in NSW rose by only seven per cent. One quarter of the increase in Indigenous imprisonment in NSW has come from a growth in the number of Indigenous persons held on remand. Three quarters of the growth is associated with a growth in the number of sentenced Indigenous prisoners.

#### **6th October - FIVE NORTHERN TERRITORY LOCATIONS TO GET PERMANENT POLICING (FED)**

Five new, permanent police stations will be built in Northern Territory priority locations under an agreement between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments. The Australian Government has allocated more than \$50 million over three years to the Northern Territory Government to build the stations in Gapuwiyak, Ramingining, Yarralin, Arlparra and Imanpa. The locations were selected on the advice of the Northern Territory Police Commissioner. The Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin and the Northern Territory Chief Minister Paul Henderson said the new police stations would strengthen the police presence across the Northern Territory.

#### **6th October 2009 - DELIVERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS TERRITORIANS (NT)**

The Northern Territory Government has launched a new strategy to lift development, create jobs and bring Indigenous Territorians into the broader economy. The Minister for Regional Development Karl Hampton today released the Northern Territory Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2009-2012. The Chief Minister Paul Henderson said the strategy will guide and encourage economic development in the regions and is vital for Indigenous advancement.

#### **2nd October 2009 - NEW CENTRES TO HELP CLOSE ABORIGINAL HEALTH AND EDUCATION GAP (WA)**

Five new children and family centres will be established across Western Australia by 2014 in an ambitious move to vastly improve education and health outcomes for Aboriginal children in the next decade. Education Minister Liz Constable said the first centre would be established in Halls Creek, with the building scheduled for completion by the end of 2010. Facilities in Fitzroy Crossing, Kununurra, Roebourne and the Swan region would follow. The centres would be established in areas of disadvantaged population, in particular Aboriginal families, and included early childhood learning and care; pre-pregnancy; antenatal; teenage health services; and maternal and child health services. These would effectively give families a one-stop shop for their early education and health needs.

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

### 2009 Martung Upah Appeal



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

NATSIEC receives significant funding from *Act of Peace* and the *Uniting Church (NSW) 2% fund*, however the rest of our funding comes from donations by Churches and Individuals to its annual appeal Martung Upah\*.

By supporting the Martung Upah appeal you are joining us in a partnership to engage Churches and 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 tomorrow 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.



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