



National Council of Churches in Australia NATSIEC

MEDIA STATEMENT – 15th June 2009

Negotiation not Coercion needed in the Northern Territory

Concerns were raised today about The Federal Government's consultations on the NT Intervention.

Mr Graeme Mundine, The Executive Secretary of The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (NATSIEC), expressed concern that the "consultations" the Federal Government are undertaking with Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory are token gestures.

"Following recent statements made by Minister Macklin, I am concerned that the Government has already decided about the future of the Intervention and these consultations are simply window dressing", said Mr Graeme Mundine.

"At a recent NATSIEC forum on the NT Intervention, Indigenous Church leaders stressed the importance of Governments negotiating proper agreements as distinct from 'consulting' on already determined policies.

"I am concerned that the Government is not committed to proper negotiations and will only "hear" those opinions that support its predetermined position. I am not confident that the Government will respectfully listen to a diverse range of Northern Territory Aboriginal Community voices".

Mr Mundine also expressed concern about Minister Macklin's comments regarding the \$125 million dollars which she says is ready to be spent if Indigenous communities sign agreements with the Government.

"That is not negotiation, that's 'whitemail'", said Mr Mundine, "Aboriginal people should not have to trade their rights. As Australian citizens they have the right to adequate housing, health and education. Governments have a responsibility to provide these services.

"Using funding to coerce Aboriginal Peoples into agreements they don't want is not much different to doling out flour and blankets while stealing our land. They said then that these things were for our own good and now they are again trampling over Aboriginal People's rights under the guise that it is 'good' for us.

"Discrimination against Aboriginal Peoples is never 'good.' The Federal Government should ensure that they are engaging in negotiations that result in just and right outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples and which respect the right of Aboriginal Peoples to take responsibility for achieving those negotiated outcomes.

Media Comment: Graeme Mundine +61 (0) 419 238 788 – gmundine@ncca.org.au

Please note that Mr Mundine is currently in The Netherlands attending a World Council of Churches Conference on The Challenges of Racism and Related Forms of Discrimination and Exclusion. The Netherlands is 8 hours behind Sydney.

The Forum Statement is available at www.ncca.org.au/natsiec

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379 Kent Street Sydney

✉ Locked Bag 199
Sydney NSW 1230

☎ (+61 2) 9299 2215

☎ (+61 2) 9262 4514

🌐 www.ncca.org.au

ABN 64 493 941 795