



1 October 2008

The Northern Territory Intervention is a Shame Job

Several hundred people converged yesterday in Alice Springs to demand the roll back of the Northern Territory Intervention. Speakers at the convergence had a clear message - the Intervention has brought shame and humiliation to Aboriginal people across the Territory and has done little or nothing to protect children as it was supposed to do.

Executive Secretary of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC), Graeme Mundine, who attended the convergence said “we have known all along that this Intervention has serious problems. Any legislation that can only exist if the Racial Discrimination Act is amended has fundamental flaws.”

“Today we have heard the same message from Elders from all over the Northern Territory: the Intervention is causing severe hardship and is curtailing people’s rights.

Some of the impacts on every day life that people spoke about include:

- People are feeling humiliated by the income management system. The system is discriminatory and everybody is subject to it, even if they have no children, or have no reason to be included.
- An inordinate amount of time is spent trying to get the system sorted out. People have to drive long distances into a town just to spend three hours in a Centrecare queue.
- Families are struggling to meet their commitments such as burying their dead as their quarantined income does not leave enough to deal with emergencies or other needs such as petrol. Freedom of movement is also therefore curtailed.
- The alcohol bans are causing social dislocation as people head to towns to avoid the bans. This is placing unreasonable pressure on town camps, which are not being supported to deal with these extra people and the issues they bring with them.”

Mr Mundine said “It is heartbreaking to hear people say they have been discarded by Government, yet again. Aborigines feel their rights have been taken away and that gains won through many hard fought battles over the years have been undermined or removed”.

“The Federal Government must stop throwing more money at bad policy”, said Mr Mundine. “It’s time to stop spending millions of dollars on administering flawed policy that does not deliver adequate services where they are needed. Stop flying in Bureaucrats from the South, stop experimenting with Aboriginal people and start listening. Start treating people with the dignity and respect they are entitled to and then maybe we can develop some good policies and programs.”



“NATSIEC is calling for urgent action by the Federal Government to:

- Reinststate the Racial Discrimination Act;
- Ratify the United Nation’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People;
- Rollback and rethink the NT Intervention;
- Implement the recommendations from the Little Children are Sacred Report.

“The honeymoon is over for the Federal Government, Aboriginal people need action and they need it now,” Mr Mundine concluded.