



17th October 2008

Recalibrate our Relationship to Eradicate Indigenous Poverty

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) is marking the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty by urging all Australians to examine and put right their relationship with Indigenous Australians.

Executive Secretary of NATSIEC, Mr Graeme Mundine said, "Indigenous Australians should not be living in poverty. Australia has the resources, but we have always lacked the will from the mainstream community to raise our Aboriginal brothers and sisters to the same standard of living that other Australians enjoy."

"On Monday, the Federal Government released its report into the Northern Territory Intervention and said they needed to "recalibrate" their relationship to Aboriginal people who are affected by the Intervention."

"No truer word was said. The past eighteen months have brought some significant changes in Indigenous affairs such as the rollout of the Northern Territory Intervention, the new Federal Government, and the Apology in February. While all these things are signals that things can improve, my fear is that too much has stayed the same. The fundamental relationship and attitude to Indigenous people has not changed," Mr Mundine continued.

"I particularly urge people not to be complacent, and think these positive signals mean all has been rectified. Don't think for a minute that the Intervention, especially in its current form, will end poverty. Don't forget for a minute that not all Aborigines live in the Northern Territory. Indigenous poverty is experienced right around Australia."

"The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty draws our attention to the needs of the poor and stirs our hearts to take action and mobilizes our voices to speak out against injustice. This year it is more pertinent than ever before as we watch the world financial system melt down. Rather than panic and worry about how we will personally be affected by the financial upheaval, could we not take this opportunity to question the system that gives wealth to 5% of humanity and leaves the other 95% floundering in the wake?"

"On this significant day I urge people to question the systems that cause poverty, to enlarge their understanding of Indigenous poverty, and to make a personal commitment to Making Indigenous Poverty History," Mr Mundine concluded.