



National Council of Churches in Australia NATSIEC

31st August 2009

Media Statement

NATSIEC supports Special Rapporteur's findings

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) has welcomed the statement by the UN's Special Rapporteur on his recent visit to Australia.

Graeme Mundine, Executive Secretary of NATSIEC, said that Professor Anaya had visited Australia at the invitation of the Federal Government and during his short visit had talked to a wide range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Mr Mundine described the remarks by Professor Anaya as insightful, but also expressed concern at comments rejecting Anaya's statement.

"Professor Anaya has gained great insight in such a short time. I am concerned, however, that both the Government and the Opposition have called for the outright rejection of Anaya's findings. Surely, if the Government are serious about, in their words, "resetting" their relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples they must encourage open and honest dialogue about the good, the bad and the ugly?" Mr Mundine said.

"The Government's response to Anaya's remarks, as reported in the media, is polarising and not in the spirit of reconciliation or relationship building.

"Of course there are those who support every aspect of the Intervention, but it is wrong to only value those experiences and ignore those who have suffered. We need to listen to criticism and ensure that policy does not discriminate." Mr Mundine said.

"It would be a shame to relegate this report to the same dusty cupboard as all the other reports with a similar message which have been ignored over the years".

Mr Mundine also called on the Government to honour their commitment to the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"Australia has now publically supported this Declaration which comprehensively outlines Indigenous Rights, they must now ensure that these principles are adhered to when developing and implementing policy. Rejecting Anaya's findings in total does not fill me with confidence that they will work towards implementing the Declaration.

"Rather than reject criticism we need to keep the communication lines open and work together to find empowering and effective solutions to these chronic issues.

"This can only be done by working closely with local communities to fulfil their hopes dreams and desires, which have been denied to them for so long; by fulfilling their dreams and not the dreams of others" Mr Mundine concluded.

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