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Gurindji tell consultations meeting: ‘stop the Intervention immediately’

Gurindji people from the communities of Kalkaringi and Daguragu spoke with a united voice during a government consultation meeting yesterday, demanding an immediate end to the NT Intervention.

Gurindji said the loss of control over community land, new CDEP arrangements forcing people to work for the BasicsCard and the take-over of community council assets by the Victoria Daly Shire are making life harder every day.

They are upset that Minister Jenny Macklin did not attend the consultation meeting personally and are demanding she face the community on ‘Freedom Day’, the 45th anniversary of the Wave Hill walk-off on August 26th.

Community spokesperson John Leemans told the consultation meeting:

“The NT Intervention must end immediately. It is a violation of our human rights, our integrity and liberty. The world is condemning it through the UN. The churches are condemning it. The majority of the voice of the Australian people know this is wrong. The government can no longer ignore the reality of failure and abuse.”

“We want control of our land back. We want to be able to practice our culture and speak our language. We want jobs created so we can work in our community”.

“There is a big movement of people into Darwin and Katherine, because there are no jobs in the community any more. This is exactly what we don’t want – people must be able to live and work on their homelands”.

“We have a brain to think for ourselves on how to run our own communities. It’s called self-determination. But since the Intervention everything has been taken away from us”.

Following the meeting John Leemans said:

“We know Minister Jenny Macklin stayed away from Gurindji country because we are strong and organised against her Intervention. We are going to keep this battle going. I am organising a protest on Freedom Day, 45 years since or old people walked off Wave Hill station”.

“I am challenging Jenny Macklin and the Prime Minister Julia Gillard to come and face us here on Freedom Day. She must see all the damage that’s been done to this community. No King, Queen, Prime Minister, dictator or whatever should be above laws of fundamental human rights”.

Gurindji worker Peter Inverway said:

"I told the consultation people I've been trying to get a job for more than two years now, but they just keep forcing me to work for the BasicsCard. It's like in the old days, before our walk-off, when the station workers were just paid in rations".

"So many young people are walking around with no jobs. The Shire bosses over Aboriginal people and has sacked many of our workers who have good qualifications and have worked for years. Non-Indigenous contractors coming in from Katherine get all the work and make big money, while Aboriginal people are thrown aside like rubbish".

"We haven't seen anything of the \$672 million Indigenous housing program. Many of our houses are from the 60s. They are falling apart and there's no one to fix them. You can fax off to NT Housing in Darwin but nothing happens. The overcrowding is terrible. We need the housing under community control. Local workers need to be employed to build new houses."

"We're sick of the racism. We're upset the government only sent public servants here for this consultation. We need to see the Minister herself to tell her – stop the Intervention".

For comment contact:

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A short video showing the struggles of Gurindji people under the Intervention is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guge6MI6cTA>