



National Council of Churches in Australia NATSIEC

Media statement for immediate release – 24th November 2009

Response to the Report on the Northern Territory Emergency Response Redesign Consultations

Responding to the Federal Government's report on consultations held to redesign the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), Graeme Mundine, Executive Secretary of NATSIEC, said "this report does not alleviate my long held concerns about the Government's consultation process.

"It is clear that these consultations were conducted with the intention of providing evidence of support for certain aspects of the NTER, particularly income management, to be excluded from the *Racial Discrimination Act* (RDA) as Special Measures.

"I am not convinced that any aspect of the Intervention can be deemed to be a special measure.

"NATSIEC has consistently expressed concern that Aboriginal Peoples have not been allowed the right to identify and negotiate solutions for themselves, their families and their community. These consultations were more about the Government seeking support for its already determined options, rather than a genuine attempt to sit down with people and to establish genuine partnerships. Our position is supported by evidence in the *Will they be Heard?* report.

"I would also question from an Aboriginal point of view whether sufficient time and information was provided for the meetings. I am particularly concerned about the lack of appropriate interpreters. Ensuring that information is provided, and that discussions are conducted, in an appropriate language by properly skilled people is vitally important for the validity of any "consultation" process.

"Minister Macklin has consistently promised to reinstate the RDA in this Parliamentary session. We have been left waiting until the final two days of the year. Technically the Minister is keeping her word, but it is likely that the legislation will not be passed until next year and so Aboriginal people have been let down yet again.

"NATSIEC has always promoted the opinion that legislation that does not conform to the RDA is bad legislation. Rather than seek to find ways around the RDA we call on the Government to find ways to bring benefits and solutions to communities that are empowering and workable rather than discriminatory and humiliating. The Government should fully reinstate the RDA immediately and start spending its time on creating positive solutions", Mr Mundine concluded.

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