

1. Three years of NT Intervention – but hardly any improvements

In June 2007, then Prime Minister John Howard and his Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough announced that the federal government would send the army into Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in response to the “*Little Children are Sacred*” Report. This report was the result of an inquiry into allegations of widespread child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory. Mr. Howard called the situation “akin to a national emergency”. This action was to become commonly known as the Northern Territory Intervention which introduced a huge amount of “Special Measures” – emergency response legislation - that had some drastic changes and impact on the lives of the Aboriginal communities affected by it.

Three years after this “emergency” response there have hardly been any improvements in the situation. The available statistics show that

- the child malnutrition rate has increased
- the unemployment rate has increased
- the program to build new houses (SIHIP) has only delivered very few houses so far
- school enrolments and attendance have basically not changed despite efforts to increase school attendance
- Income management did not result in buying more fresh food and vegetables

Even the latest government progress report paints a devastating picture. Evidence for all the above statements can be found in the provided links.

Links:

Crikey - **NT intervention three years on: government's progress report is disturbing** - by Professor Jon Altman from the Australian National University - 21 June 2010

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/06/21/nt-intervention-three-years-on-governments-progress-report-is-disturbing>

ABC News - **3 years on, NT intervention still sparks anger** - 21 June 2010

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2900777.htm>

SMH - **Let Aboriginal communities have a say over intervention** - 22 June 2010

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/let-aboriginal-communities-have-a-say-over-intervention-20100622-yuuf.html>

eMJA The Medical Journal of Australia - **Impact of income management on store sales in the Northern Territory** - by Julie K Brimblecombe, Joseph McDonnell, Adam Barnes, Joanne Garnggulkpuy Dhurrkay, David P Thomas and Ross S Bailie – 17 May 2010

http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/192_10_170510/bri10090_fm.html

Crikey - **Rudd overpromised on indigenous unemployment** - by Professor Jon Altman and Dr Nicholas Biddle from the Australian National University - 4 June 2010

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/06/04/closing-the-gap-rudd-overpromised-on-indigenous-unemployment/>

The Greens - **Greens mark third anniversary of the NT Intervention** - 21 June 2010

<http://greensmps.org.au/content/media-release/greens-mark-third-anniversary-nt-intervention>

Crikey - **Macklin's twists truth on income management** - by Julie Brimblecombe and David Thomas - 17 May 2010 - <http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/05/17/income-management-isnt-working-and-macklins-twisting-the-truth/>

UTS - **Return to the Ration Days - The NT Intervention: grass-roots experience and resistance** -

A discussion paper prepared by Paddy Gibson, Senior Researcher, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology Sydney, June 2009 -

<http://www.jumbunna.uts.edu.au/publications/pdf/JIHLBP11.pdf>

Crikey - **After the NT intervention: violence up, malnutrition up, truancy up** - by Professor Jon Altman from the Australian National University - 9 November 2009 –
<http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/11/09/after-the-nt-intervention-violence-up-malnutrition-up-truancy-up/>

2. Housing – the failing of the SIHIP program

The Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) is a program undertaken by the Australian and Northern Territory Governments. The five-year program should deliver 750 new houses, rebuild 230 houses and refurbish 2,500 houses for Aboriginal people in the NT by 2013.

The program has a \$672 million budget, out of which more than \$200 million have already been spent. According to FaHCSIA (the responsible government office) by the end of May 2010 the following “progress” has been made:

- 11 houses have been build, 83 are underway
- 223 rebuilds and refurbishments have been completed, 127 are underway

So after spending about one third of the budget and more than two years having elapsed, about 1.5% of the promised houses and 8% of the rebuilds / refurbishments have been completed, further 11% of the houses and 5% of the rebuilds / refurbishments are on the way.

It is extremely unlikely that the program will be able to meet its targets.

Very recently there have been signs of a policy shift: Two Aboriginal communities were allowed to participate in the project. One of them was able to build 12 houses in 6 months. If the policy of involving Aboriginal communities in building houses continues, there is a chance of getting at least some kind of positive outcome from the project.

Links

Latest progress reports from FaHCSIA (Australian Government – Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs):

<http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/housing/Pages/sihip.aspx>

The Australian - **Report warns of Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program failure** - by Natasha Robinson and Lex Hall - 10 June 2010

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/report-warns-of-strategic-indigenous-housing-and-infrastructure-program-failure/story-e6frg6nf-1225877657612>

ABC - **SIHIP failures 'disgusting' says ex-GBM** - by Emma Sleath and Alice Brennan (Cross Media Reporter) - 28 June 2010 -

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2010/06/28/2938683.htm?site=alicesprings>

The Canberra Times - **Indigenous housing scheme under fire** – by Tara Ravens - 20 August 2009

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/national/national/general/indigenous-housing-scheme-under-fire/1601156.aspx>

ABC - **SIHIP project management costs 'astronomical'** - by Rick Hind - Updated 15 June 2010

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/15/2927182.htm>

Tennant & District Times - **Camp residents' SIHIP fears** - 31 July 2009

<http://tennantcreek.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/camp-residents-sihip-fears/1583473.aspx>

NIT - **THE BIG READ: Jenny's House** - by Amy McQuire – 6 August 2009 -

<http://www.nit.com.au/News/story.aspx?id=18383>

The Australian - **Taking control of indigenous housing scheme** – 3 July 2010 -

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/taking-control-of-indigenous-housing-scheme/story-e6frg6zo-1225887306563>

3. No Paedophile rings in the NT

The NT Intervention was based on allegations of wide-spread sexual abuse of children and paedophile rings.

More than 8000 children from the NT have received mandatory health checks. These health checks have not led to an increased identification of child abuse cases, but other health issues have been picked up.

The ACC (Australian Crime Commission) established a National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force (NIITF). This Task Force found no evidence for the existence of paedophile rings in the NT. Instead, the findings suggest that poor information sharing between all involved parties (service providers, all level of government agencies) have led to an inadequate understanding of the extent and nature of child abuse and consequently, inadequate responses to address these issues.

Links:

Address by the CEO of the Australian Crime Commission, Alastair Milroy, to the 2008 Bennelong Society Conference - 20 June 2008 - <http://www.bennelong.com.au/conferences/pdf/Milroy2008.pdf>

The Age - **Pedophile ring claims unfounded** - by Nick McKenzie - 5 July 2009
<http://www.theage.com.au/national/pedophile-ring-claims-unfounded-20090704-d8h9.html>

Green Left - **NT intervention based on "big lie" says journalist** - by Annie Nielsen – 23 May 2009
<http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/41720>

Reconciliation - **Aboriginal child abuse and the NT Intervention** – 29 June 2008
<http://reconciliation.org.au/nsw/recent-issues/aboriginal-child-abuse-and-the-nt-intervention/>

Reporting Back: the Northern Territory Intervention - One Year On - Jeff McMullen - Address to the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater - 1 September 2008
<http://www.asgmwp.net/ReportingBackbyJeff%20McMullen.htm>

World Socialist Website – **Northern Territory intervention Manipulating social tragedies for political gain Part 4** - by a WSWWS reporting team - 15 July 2008 -
<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2008/jul2008/nt4-j15.shtml>

Fathers4Equality Blog - **Extent of Aboriginal child abuse far 'worse': report** –
Posted by Chloe Mayer - 28 May 2009 - <http://www.f4e.com.au/equalparenting/FiDBlog.nsf/dx/extent-of-aboriginal-child-abuse-far-worse-report?opendocument&comments>

4. Australia's massive human rights violations towards Aboriginal peoples under the NTER (NT Intervention)

Australia is in breach of a staggering 25 articles – more than half - of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Australia endorsed decades ago, the intervention breaches almost half of the 30 articles.

In February 2009 a group of 20 Aboriginal people made a “Request for Urgent Action” to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

As a result, the Committee has requested the Australian Government should take urgent action to ensure that the Northern Territory Intervention complies with Australia’s obligations under the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, James Anaya, stated after his visit to Australia that the measures of the NT Intervention are incompatible with Australia’s international human rights obligations.

A legislation (“New RDA laws”) that claims to rectify the breaches of the international human rights obligation by seeming to re-instate the suspended Racial Discrimination Act has passed both houses of parliament on 21 June 2010, the day of the third anniversary of the NT Intervention. It is very unlikely that this new legislation will reach this goal, as stated by Professor, the Honourable Alastair Nicholson, Former Chief Justice, Family Court of Australia: “I urge all of you to continue the fight against this legislation and to maintain that fight even if it is passed. As an Australian I am tired of my country being subjected by its Governments to classification as racist and white supremacist and I am tired of being ashamed of my country as I have been since the advent of the Howard Government and now its successor.”

Links:

NIT - **The intervention: a battalion of human rights breaches** – 2 October 2008
<http://www.nit.com.au/story.aspx?id=16231>

Human Rights Law Resource Centre - **Indigenous Rights: Request for Urgent Action on NT Intervention from UN CERD (Sept 2009)**
<http://www.hrlrc.org.au/content/topics/equality/northern-territory-intervention-request-for-urgent-action-cerd/>

Report from James Anaya (Advanced version)
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/rapporteur/docs/ReportVisitAustralia.pdf>

Yahoo News - **NT intervention violates human rights: UN** – 24 February 2010
<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/6848692/nt-intervention-violates-human-rights-un/>

ABC - **UN rapporteur raps NT intervention** – by Alexandra Kirk - 24 February 2010
<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2010/s2828921.htm>

GALDU – Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - **AUSTRALIA: Aboriginal Program Violates Human Rights, UN Special Rapporteur** – 24 February 2010 -
<http://www.galdu.org/web/index.php?odas=4353&qjella1=eng>

Address delivered by Professor the Honourable Alastair Nicholson AO RFD QC - **The Failure of the Rudd Government’s Aboriginal Policy** - 29 March 2010 –
http://stoptheintervention.org/uploads/files_to_download/A-Nicholson-RDA-29-3-10.pdf

New RDA laws: <http://stoptheintervention.org/rda-new-legislation>

5. The so-called “consultations” about the future directions of the NTER

The government conducted so-called “consultations” about the future of the NT Intervention policies in Aboriginal communities from June to August 2009. These consultations were done at four levels:

- Tier 1: individuals, families and small groups in communities
- Tier 2: whole-of-community meetings

- Tier 3: regional workshops involving community people from NTER communities as well as Indigenous leaders in particular regions
- Tier 4: workshops with major Indigenous stakeholder organisations in the Northern Territory

The government claims that the result of these consultations is an overwhelming support of Aboriginal people for the now introduced changes to the NT Intervention legislation.

This claim is based on the results of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 meetings. The government did not explain why the results of the Tier 3 and Tier 4 meetings, which were clearly opposed to the new legislation, were completely ignored.

There are serious indications that the consultation process itself was deeply flawed. The problems include amongst others insufficient notifications that consultations were to be held, the consultations were conducted by government employees, there was a lack of interpreters at the meeting and biased material was presented at the consultations. There is even a report of a case where a woman was sitting under a tree when she was approached by the local government business manager and asked some questions. Only when the woman noticed that her answers were recorded and asked why she found out that she was just being “consulted”.

There is only very little evidence available about the Tier 1 and 2 consultations. The report “Will they be heard?” analyses three of the consultations and looks at other community reports and five government regional reports from the same consultative process seeking the views of representatives from all prescribed communities in the Northern Territory. The report reveals that Aboriginal people were voicing strong opposition to compulsory income management and other NTER measures. The book “This Is What We Said” which follows from the report, provides quotes from the affected people in the NT. All of this evidence shows a clear opposition of the “consulted” people against the new NT Intervention laws.

In summary, all publicly available evidence (Tier 3 and 4 “consultations”, three Tier 2 “consultations”) suggest strong opposition against the new NT Intervention laws. There is no reason to assume the other Tier 1 and 2 consultations should have expressed different positions. Yet this is exactly what the government claims. The government also claims to have evidence to support its position (i.e. the transcripts of the other Tier 1 and Tier 2 “consultations”). However, the government refused to make this evidence available to the public and also refused (with the support of the opposition) to disclose the evidence to the senate.

In other words, the government claims a position that is exactly the opposite to what all the available evidence points. It claims to have evidence for its position, but refuses to provide this evidence to anyone. This strongly suggests that the government does not have any evidence for its position.

Please note that the government (still) claims to use evidence-based policy-making.

Links

FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) -

Report on the Northern Territory Emergency Response Redesign Consultations

http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/Documents/redesign_consultations/default.htm

Report: **Will they be heard?** -

<http://www.socialpolicyconnections.com.au/Portals/3/docs/wil%20they%20be%20heard%20report%20nov%2009.pdf>

Book review: **This Is What We Said** - <http://www.creativespirits.info/resources/books/this-is-what-we-said.html>

Crikey - **The truth about the NT intervention and government consultation** - by National Indigenous Times editor Chris Graham with research by Amy McQuire and Madelaine Sealey – 7 July 2009

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/07/07/the-truth-about-the-nt-intervention-and-government-consultation/>

AnTAR NSW newsletter, pages 2 and 3 – **Amendments to the Northern Territory Intervention**
<http://www.antar.org.au/sites/default/files/ANTaR%20May%20Newsletter.pdf>

Green Left - **Fake consultations in the NT** – by Peter Robson - 21 June 2009
<http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/41868>

Crikey - **Will they be heard?** – by Eva Cox – 24 November 2009
<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/thestump/2009/11/24/will-they-be-heard-not-when-a-consultation-is-a-continuation-of-the-problem-rather-than-the-possible-solution-like-the-federal-government%E2%80%99s-attempt-to-justify-its-nt-intervention/>

STICS - **Forum: Welfare Quarantining and the RDA** <http://stoptheintervention.org/forum-welfare-quarantining-and-the-rda>

STICS - **Racial Discrimination Act - New Legislation** - <http://stoptheintervention.org/rda-new-legislation>