

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW LEGISLATION IGNORES ABORIGINAL VIEWS

‘concerned Australians’, an informal group has produced a book that gives voice to what many Aboriginal people feel about the NT Intervention. The ‘concerned Australians’ group is supported by a broad group of churches, social justice groups and individuals across the country who care about human rights.

The book is entitled, “*This Is What We Said*”. It is based on video footage of Government consultations in 3 Aboriginal communities, community regional reports and 5 government regional reports from the same consultative process.

Editor, Michele Harris OAM, said, “The new legislation recently tabled in Parliament leads us to believe that the majority of Aboriginal people have not been heard by Government. They have been ignored.”

Michele Harris said that an earlier “Concerned Australians” report, “*Will They Be Heard*”, concluded the consultation process had been flawed. This report was launched by former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser in November last year.

“It found that many Aboriginal people were not supportive of numerous aspects of the Intervention and that some measures were far from understood.”

“This means that current Government efforts to re-instate the suspended Racial Discrimination Act are not based on information that takes into account the wishes of many Aboriginal people nor does it respect their rights to self-determination.”

“Rather than empower, this legislation continues the paternalistic and failed approaches of the past. Major amendments will be required if the legislation is to reflect the intent of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to which Australia has given its formal support.”

Ms Harris expressed delight that Alastair Nicholson and Irene Fisher have agreed to launch the book in Melbourne.

Alastair Nicholson, a former Chief Justice of the Family Court, will share his views on the new legislation due to be debated in Parliament.

Irene Fisher is the former CEO of the Katherine Sunrise Health Service and has direct experience of the Intervention.

Canberra based documentary maker, Eleanor Gilbert provided the beautiful photography for the book and played an important role in its development.

The Melbourne launch is at 12:30 pm, Tuesday 9 February at the Melbourne University Bookshop. The book will also be launched in other States.

Contacts:

Alastair Nicholson: 0418 533 411

Irene Fisher: 0427 711 060

Michele Harris: (03) 9415 7164

Link to the report *Will They Be Heard* : <http://www.socialpolicyconnections.com.au/>