



Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney

stoptheintervention@gmail.com
www.stoptheintervention.org

Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney

Media Release

10 March 2016

Sydney Public Forum on the Need for Treaty

On Monday 14 March in Redfern, Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney (STICS) will host a public forum about First Nations “Men speak out for Treaty”.

The federal government is currently pushing its campaign to recognise First Nations Peoples in the Commonwealth Constitution. Yet without Treaty, the sovereignty of First Nations People remains unrecognised and fundamental rights continue to be denied.

Wiri man Tony McAvoy, who will speak at the forum, has drafted a Charter for an Assembly of First Nations. The first meeting of the Assembly is due to occur in June 2016 in Darwin prior to the National Native Title Conference. One of the imperatives in establishing an Assembly of First Nations is to have a body that can lobby for and then negotiate a national framework treaty. “We have an obligation to overcome this major obstacle in *our time*. We will have failed our children and our grandchildren if they are still having to call for a treaty after we are gone.”

He added, “There is a real national need for some reckoning and some closure. The whole notion that Australia was “settled” relies upon centuries old legal principles to the effect that we Aboriginal people are somehow a lesser form of human than the British. That Australia continues to rely upon those principles is damning and the immorality of it is something that most Australians will be able to appreciate.”

Treaty would address this historical injustice and lay the basis for equitable relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

“A treaty with the First Australians is the ultimate way to acknowledge and honour the humanity of Australia”, Chris Sarra, Founding Chairman of the Stronger Smarter Institute, said. “A Treaty sets all Australians free of the Terra Nullius lie that the nation we share now is founded upon”, he continued, “we are all diminished when the nation we are founded upon is founded on a lie.”

Treaty would also ensure that First Nations People are allowed to exercise their right to self-determination. Without this right, First Nations People have been forced to live under racist, harmful government policies, such as the Northern Territory Intervention. This punitive measure and its later incarnation – Stronger Futures – has not only failed to improve the socioeconomic conditions of First Nations People, it has compounded the harm of 228 years of colonial dispossession.

Yingiya Mark Guyula, a Yolngu Nations Assembly Spokesperson who lives under the Intervention, [calls for Treaty](#): “We want treaty. We want a partnership. We want a dialogue in decision-making. We want diplomatic talks with the government - the Yolngu government and the Balanda [non-Indigenous] government.”

He continues ““when the Macassans first arrived on the north coast of Arnhem land they straight away saw human beings living there... [people] here practicing their own governance... the Macassans came and made negotiations to work together... when the first fleet came they looked at people as flora and fauna... they ignored our culture... and the system of governance already here... that is why we say give us our power back.”

The call for Treaty is growing. On 3 February, a meeting of 500 First Nations leaders in Victoria rejected constitutional recognition and passed a motion demanding that the State “resources a treaty process, including a framework for treaties, with complete collaboration with all Sovereign Peoples and Nations”. The Victorian government subsequently announced that it will begin Treaty negotiations with First Nations People within weeks.

The forum will give Sydneysiders the chance to hear from Awabakal Man, Terry Mason, who attended the Victorian meeting, and four other First Nations Men from around the country:

Yingiya Mark Guyula: Djambarrpuyngu Nation, Yolngu Nations Assembly Spokesperson

Terry Mason: Awabakal Man, Chair of NTEU A&TSI Policy Committee

Tony McAvoy SC: Wiri Man, Barrister

Tauto Sansbury: Narungga Elder and Aboriginal Advocate

Chris Sarra: Gurang Gurang, Founding Chairman, Stronger Smarter Institute

Facilitator: Jeff McMullen, journalist and film-maker

Monday 14th March 2016, 6 pm for 6.30 pm start, Redfern Community Centre, 29-53 Hugo Street Redfern.

For more information contact: Cathy Gill on 0422385852