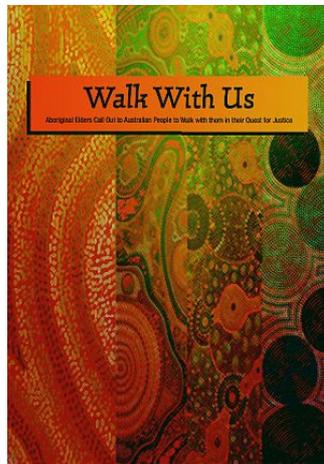


Review

of the book

Walk With Us

Aboriginal Elders Call Out to Australian People
to Walk with them in their Quest for Justice



ISBN: 978-0-646-56135-6

71 pages, hard cover book
with Aboriginal cover design

Photographs by Joseph Annetts
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Compiled and published by
'concerned Australians'

Price: \$15

www.concernedaustralians.com.au

Walk With Us - Aboriginal Elders Call Out to Australian People to Walk with them in their Quest for Justice, published in August 2011, is the long awaited sequel to the highly regarded and recommended ***This Is What We Said - Australian Aboriginal people give their views on the Northern Territory Intervention of February 2010***.

Walk With Us provides one of the very rare opportunities to hear genuine voices of Aboriginal Elders. It presents the ongoing impact of the NT Intervention on the lives of Aboriginal people in their own words.

This beautifully illustrated and important book supplies an update of the current status of the NT Intervention. It explores recent happenings in the Northern Territory, including unsatisfactory changes to the legislation leading to the flawed reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act on 31 December 2010 and exposes the continued discrimination. *Walk With Us* covers the visit of two Aboriginal NT Elders, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks and Rev Dr Djinyini Gondarra, to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in Geneva in August 2010. Following this visit CERD issued "Concluding Observations", a document in which it made recommendations to the Australian Government. About her visit to Geneva Ms Kunoth-Monks said she felt for the first time that she was indeed a part of the human race. "I have to go out of Australia to have that

wonderful feeling and the lack of control that was on me, in a different country a long, long way from home.”

Six communities are presented in this book: Galiwin'ku - Elcho Island, Nauiyu - Daly River, Yuendumu, Utopia, Yirrkala and Milingimbi, and what the Elders are saying about the Intervention; shires and hub towns; customary law; culture, language and identity; respect and heritage.

The deep hurt and great despair the NT Intervention is causing Aboriginal people is evident from comments like the one from George Gaymarani Pascoe from Milingimbi: “The Intervention has brought the history of welfare reform back today. We don't want that. It hurts. Today a lot of our people are committing suicide; today a lot of our people can't cope with the Intervention.” Rosalie Kunoth-Monks even calls the Intervention a ‘second invasion’ saying “It is the land that holds us together and following the second invasion of the 2007 Intervention, we are hurting, we are suffering”.

The heartfelt and passionate statement by seven NT Aboriginal Elders in Melbourne on 7 February 2011 to the people of Australia which was read out by Djapirri Mununggirritj to an audience of about 400 people at a forum at the Melbourne University Law School is particularly striking. The threat to their culture, language and heritage as well as their loss of human rights are clearly expressed in this moving statement. The statement ends with an emotional appeal to all people of Australia to “walk with us in true equality. Speak out and help to put an end to the nightmare that Northern Territory Aboriginal people are experiencing on a daily basis.”

The message these Elders are sending to the people of Australia is clear: we need to resist these policies that are causing Aboriginal people so much hurt and harm, instead we need to walk with them. As Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra put it: “Don't let the other people, the First People of this country, be rejected! Being seen as the second class citizen! Being seen as an outcast! We have lived in this country as a foreigner! We invite you brothers and sisters, walk with us, then fight a system that victimises people.”

Also included in *Walk With Us* are important quotes by Malcom Fraser, Alastair Nicholson, Aboriginal people from other parts of Australia, leading Australians and last but not least Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Ms Pillay flew into Darwin in May 2011 especially to meet with Aboriginal Elders and leaders from communities across the Territory.

Walk With Us continues with the further round of consultations which started in June 2011. Ms Pillay remarked: “There should be a major effort to ensure not just consultation with the communities concerned in any future measures, but also their consent and active participation”. The book concludes with a response by Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra to the Prime Minister Julia Gillard's Announcement of a Second Intervention in the Northern Territory.

Auntie Millie said about this book that it is “heartbreaking to read the words of the people from the Northern Territory”

At the Sydney launch of *Walk With Us* on 1 September 2011, Jeff McMullen conveyed a heartfelt message from Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, whose quotes are also featured in the book, that she wanted the audience to know that the voices in this

book are true and this is what is happening and they want others to walk with them.

At this launch Nicole Watson pointed out that “It is crucial that we hear the voices of those who live under these measures. *Walk With Us* provides an unflinching gaze into life under the intervention. There is pain in these pages. But there is also courage, resilience and wisdom. One of the most prescient statements came from Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, who said: “Does there need to be a policy about Aboriginal people? Does it need to come down from government? “Why not have a dialogue with the Aboriginal people and get some direction from us?”

For more information about *Walk With Us* (including an order form), please see <http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/> or <http://stoptheintervention.org/facts/films-and-literature/book-walk-with-us>

For more information about *This Is What We Said*, please see <http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/> or <http://stoptheintervention.org/facts/films-and-literature/book-this-is-what-we-said>