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### **Racial discrimination entrenched in new NT Intervention laws**

The Alice Springs Based Intervention Rollback Action group (IRAG) and STICS (Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney) have condemned the *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform and Reinstatement of Racial Discrimination Act)* Bill, expected to pass through the Senate this week.

IRAG and STICS say many aspects of the new laws entrench racial discrimination and continue the hardships being felt under the NT Intervention.

“This is a day of shame for Rudd’s Labor. Naming this legislation the ‘Reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act’ is pure cynicism. The support this bill is receiving from Tony Abbott speaks volumes. The Australian Human Rights Commission and other legal experts have been clear that Jenny Macklin’s new laws will continue to deny the full protections of the Racial Discrimination Act to Aboriginal people. All draconian controls initiated by Howard in the NT will continue”, said Peter Robson from the STICS.

“This 5-year lease is not a 'special measure' it has only taken us backwards. The rate of services we have been getting as a community have dropped down tremendously. Not one house has been built except for white staff. All the Government Business Managers ever do is arrange meetings, where the community has no real power - they pick people out and try divide and rule tactics. There has been no consultation about these measures whatsoever”, said Harry Jakamarra Nelson, a leader of the Warlpiri people, whose community at Yuendumu is living under the Intervention.

“We want the government to pass legislation that will give us the full protection of the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA). We will continue to fight for our rights”, concluded Mr Nelson.

“Kevin Rudd argued yesterday that the new Income Management system would help encourage people into work and ‘break the cycle of passive welfare’. This is painful hypocrisy. The government has \$352 million to spend on Income Management over the next 4 years in the NT – but is refusing to release a measly \$8 million to guarantee 500 jobs in remote NT Shires”, said Paddy Gibson from IRAG.

“Recent ABS statistics show Aboriginal unemployment has dramatically increased under the Rudd government. Thousands of Aboriginal people have been forced out of work and onto Income Management by the closure of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP). Under the new CDEP, Aboriginal people are actually being forced to work up to 30 hours a week just to receive their Centrelink pay and BasicsCard. Rudd would rather control and stigmatise struggling people than invest in desperately needed jobs and services”, said Paddy Gibson from the IRAG.

“The new Income Management system will mean racism as usual for NT Aboriginal people. Despite the spin it is clear who will be targeted. Aboriginal unemployment stands at 90% in the Alice Springs town camps and 70% across the Central Australian region - this compared with 4% for the general population”, concluded Mr Gibson.

“Jenny Macklin has claimed that some categories of welfare recipients - such as aged pensioners - will be exempt from her new scheme. But anyone deemed 'vulnerable' can still be forced onto Income Management. Under draft guidelines, 'vulnerability' can apply to anyone who is poor or who has an extended family. Triggers include not being able to afford fuel to travel to funerals, or

sharing one's money with other family members. The Income Management system remains racist in flagrant breach of human rights", said Dr Hilary Tyler from IRAG.

**Protest events will take place around the country to mark three years of Intervention.**

In Alice Springs IRAG will host a public forum to discuss the new laws in the Andy McNeill room, Town Council Building at 6pm on Monday June 21.

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