

Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney Media Release

21 March 2013 for immediate release

Protest against NT Intervention and income management on UN Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney (STICS) will rally today at the office of Federal Labor Minister Tanya Plibersek. The rally will mark the UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and National Close the Gap Day.

STICS is calling for the repeal of the Stronger Futures legislation, which extends the draconian Intervention into Northern Territory Aboriginal communities until 2022.

The rally is also launching a push to stop the further roll out of the income management system for Centrelink payments, which was first introduced under the NT intervention and expanded to Bankstown in Sydney in July 2012.

In a recently announced further expansion, from July 2013 income management will be compulsory for anyone under 25 who is being released from prison, or who has an 'unable to live at home' status with Centrelink. This will be applied in Bankstown, the NT and all 'trial sites' across Australia.

"March 21 is the anniversary of the massacre of anti-Apartheid activists in Sharpeville, South Africa in 1960. But while this is officially sanitised as 'harmony day' in Australia, our very own apartheid is continuing in the NT, with explicitly racist Stronger Futures laws", said Paddy Gibson from STICS.

"Aboriginal people in the NT are now amongst the most incarcerated groups on the planet, with more than an 80 per cent increase in prison numbers since 2007. The death of Kwentymaye Briscoe at the hands of the police in Alice Springs last year is a horrific symbol of this persecution and we are demanding justice".

"Now under a further expansion of income management, young prisoners will be automatically placed on income management from July 2013. This will overwhelmingly be applied to Aboriginal people in the trial sites across Australia, who are locked up at 18 times the non-Indigenous rate".

"Today is also being marked as National Close the Gap Day - but 'the gap' will never be closed with racism. As Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek needs to answer for the 160% increase in Aboriginal youth suicide under Intervention and a shocking six fold increase in reported incidents of self-harm", added Mr Gibson.

"Minister Tanya Plibersek was the face of the expansion of income management into Bankstown when she was in charge of Centrelink. But we have fought a hard campaign that has largely succeeded in stopping the government's plans for income management in Bankstown so far. A strong alliance of community groups and unions has taken a stand", said Sue Gillett, an Aboriginal activist from Bankstown and STICS member.

"Workers are simply refusing to refer people onto the system. The human rights abuses we see in the NT are unacceptable and we need to end this injustice not expand it".

"We are extremely concerned about these recently announced categories of people targeted for income management from July 2013. Youth who are homeless or exiting prison are very vulnerable and need housing, support and employment opportunities not further demonisation through income management. Today we commit to fighting this new expansion every step of the way", concluded Sue Gillett.

For more information contact:

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Rally details:

Thursday March 21

12:30 at the office of Tanya Plibersek MP

150 Broadway, opposite Broadway Shopping Centre

Speakers include:

Sue Gillett, Aboriginal activist from Bankstown and member of STICS

Robin Croon, Public Service Association (PSA NSW)

Ray Jackson, Indigenous Social Justice Association

Brett Collins, Justice Action

Stop Stronger Futures - no to ten more years of Intervention

Stop the expansion of income management: not in the NT, not in Bankstown, not anywhere

Stop Black deaths in custody - justice for Kwementyaye Briscoe and all victims.