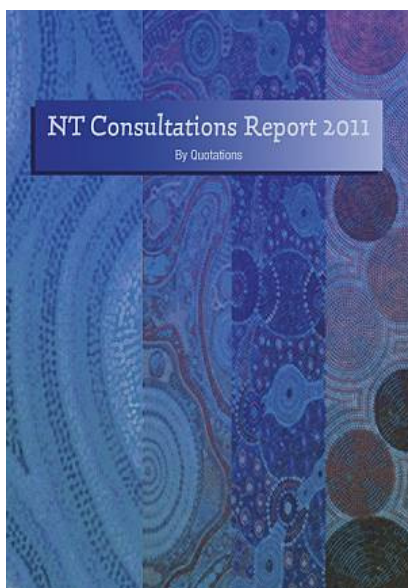


Review of the book

NT Consultations Report 2011: By Quotations



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72 pages, hard cover book
with Aboriginal cover design

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“NT Consultations Report 2011: By Quotations”, published in February 2012, is an important sequel to the highly regarded *“This Is What We Said”* (February 2010) and *“Walk With Us”* (August 2011).

Between June and August 2011 the Australian Government conducted Stronger Futures Consultations in Northern Territory communities with the stated purpose of finding out what worked and what didn't work under the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) - commonly called the Intervention - which started in 2007. This book is presented in a most accessible and attractive format with highlights of quotations taken from ten consultations which were independently recorded.

Beautifully illustrated, this hard-backed book gives voice to the views of Aboriginal people living under the Intervention. Mainstream media has given much commentary to the controversial laws under which Aboriginal Peoples in the Northern Territory now live. In this book we hear the true voices of Aboriginal people calling out to be heard. Each page speaks volumes about their frustration and despair at the failure of Government to listen.

Every quotation contains a clear expression of the participants' thoughtful responses to the issues faced by their communities. The reader cannot fail to be moved by the deep commitment of the community members who gave their time yet again to engage in consultations with the government. This commitment was given despite the betrayal of having their voices ignored in previous consultations such as were documented in *“This Is What We Said”*.

Though these quotations are short they provide insights into the cumulative impact of the NTER laws from 2007. The responses are presented under various topics such as feelings about the consultations, requests for the return of control over communities, support for homelands and the importance of education, including the restoration of bilingual programmes. Also addressed are job losses, confusion about the constant change of government policies, lack of promised housing, the unaffordability of healthy fresh food and as well, the fact that 80% of Homelands were 'dry' before the Intervention started.

Within these quotations are carefully considered, locally-based solutions which could be easily implemented. These solutions should be genuinely considered by the Government - if only they were "really" listening. *"Are we going to be heard? [referring to the previous round of consultations] It just went in here [pointing to right ear] here [pointing to left ear] and blew it out, the wind blew it out."* One cannot fail to notice that the solutions offered by Aboriginal people are consistent with the articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for which the government expressed its support on 3 April 2009.

The introduction to this book gives an overview of the strength of the most constant recurring themes during the consultations; the demand for community control to be returned to the people and for the right to self-determination to be re-established. Ironically these are not referred to in the published Government's Consultation Report. Similarly the desire for the return of bilingual learning programmes to Northern Territory schools, repeatedly called for during the consultations, hardly gets a mention in the Government Report.

What makes this book so unique is that it is based on the only recordings of the 2011 consultations. This book is essential reading for every citizen in Australia. It provides the opportunity to listen to this country's First Peoples' authentic voices which often fail to reach the mainstream media. These voices deserve to be heard and respected.

Full transcripts of the quotations can be found on the 'concerned Australians' website. The prequels are also highly recommended and further information about them is at: www.concernedaustralians.com.au.

The **Sydney book launch** of "***NT Consultations Report 2011: By Quotations***" will take place at **Amnesty International's NSW Action Centre**, Level 1, 79 Myrtle Street, Chippendale on Friday, **4 May 2012** at 5.30pm for 6pm start.

Speakers include:

Graeme Mundine, Executive Officer, ACM Sydney Archdiocese

Amy McQuire, Editor, Tracker Magazine

By Cathy Gill and Sabine Kacha