



Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney

A decade ago, on 21 June 2007, the [Racial Discrimination Act 1975 was suspended](#) to allow for the Northern Territory Emergency Response – commonly known as the Intervention. This tremendously invasive controversial move still impacts on communities in the Northern Territory in detrimental ways and has caused a lot of despair.

The discriminatory impact in relation to a broad range of rights such as, rights to land, property, social security, adequate standards of living, cultural development, work and remedies was obvious. The [NT Intervention](#) was extended in 2012 for 10 years under the misguided title “[Stronger Futures](#)”.

In 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples noted that Stronger Futures laws: *stigmatise Aboriginal communities by subjecting them to compulsory income management, forced participation in work for the dole schemes that pay individuals far less than an average [award] rate as well as fines and welfare reductions for parents whose children are truant in school.* The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, [in its 2016 review of Stronger Futures](#), found that the blanket application of policies, lack of consultation and lack of review mechanisms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples breached human rights

[The Intervention](#) also has not addressed but compounded the situation that more than one in five Indigenous households are in Australia’s poorest 10 per cent of households, more than twice the rest of Australia.

[Oxfam Australia’s Head of Policy Dr Nicole Bieske](#) spoke of Australia’s shameful failure to work in meaningful partnership with First Nations leaders. She said that Aboriginal children *are grossly over-represented in detention centres, and the child mortality rate is double the national average.*

[Amnesty International stated](#) that *Australia locks up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children 25 times more than non-Indigenous children. Cases of self-harm or abuse of Indigenous children have been reported in children’s prisons in every state and territory.* [We’ve seen from the horrific images at Don Dale](#) that the youth justice system harms rather than helps children. This screams of hypocrisy considering the Northern Territory Intervention “Emergency Response” [did not once mention child sexual abuse or the words child or children](#) and the Australian Crime Commission found [no evidence of organised paedophilia in NT First Nations communities.](#) [Not that there was no evidence of these claims – that these claims were actually false.](#)

[In April, the U.N. also attacked the "disturbing" incarceration rates for Indigenous youth.](#) In the Northern Territory, First Nations people make up 83 per cent of the adult prison population. The national imprisonment rate for First Nations adults is [13 times higher than that for non-Indigenous adults.](#) While First Nations people are only 2% of the population, they account for 27% of the prison population. [Mandatory sentencing and imprisonment for fine default, as canvassed by the current Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry, are key contributors to these statistics.](#) The situation also of increasing suicides rates in the Northern Territory since the Intervention is harrowing.

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still die at least 10 years younger than non-Indigenous Australians](#). A small sample of the problems the Australian NGO Coalition Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee report [highlights](#): • Our “excessive police powers to lock people up”, including paperless arrest laws in the Northern Territory which are disproportionately used to imprison Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for trivial offences. • Our appallingly high numbers of Indigenous deaths in custody — the report notes that despite over 200 Indigenous deaths in custody from 1980-2013, no police officer has ever been convicted in relation to Indigenous deaths in custody.

[The UN has previously criticized Australia’s treatment of its First Nations peoples](#), with a report from its special rapporteur, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz. The report, on her 15-day visit in March, reviewed the impact of the 2007 Intervention aimed at curbing alcohol abuse, domestic violence and improving the health of First Australians in remote communities.

Decades of poor health, education and stubbornly low living standards have left First Nations people ill-equipped to compete for the spoils of development, or to negotiate land access or land rights changes effectively. Most Aboriginal leaders want economic opportunity but [fear exploitation](#). The Territory has an appalling record of misusing Aboriginal funds. Attorney-General John Elfrink in April 2017, described the Territory’s Aboriginal Land Rights Act, the nation’s premier piece of land rights legislation, as a “wall of imprisonment” blocking Aboriginal people from participating in northern development.

Patrick Dodson argued that [the children remain the highest priority, but that this “is undermined by the Government's heavy-handed authoritarian intervention and its ideological and deceptive land reform agenda”](#)

Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, NT Australian of the Year 2014 said [“Once you take away the identity and the language and the land we are lost, and where are we placed in the socio-economic setting of our lands? That's my constant desire, that Australians really care about the unique culture that has been here for many thousands of years.”](#)

Greg Marks said [“Government support for outstations is minimal at best. The long term goal is that outstations, by and large, will disappear.”](#) Former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Ian Viner wrote that the iconic 1976 Land Rights Act is under threat like never before. [“99-year town leases turn traditional ownership upside down. In reality they put the Commonwealth back into ownership and control of traditional Aboriginal land like it was before the Land Rights Act was passed as if Aboriginal land had returned to reserve status under Commonwealth control. No one can really imagine that in 99 years time the Commonwealth will, or could, return to the people absolute ownership of traditional land which had been alienated by these 99-year leases.”](#)

Senator Rachel Siewert said recently, that the Community Development Program [“is a discriminatory program that is financially penalising Aboriginal people more harshly than those on the other work for the dole program, that is not producing the results and causing disastrous outcomes for communities.”](#) In September [“APO NT launched a positive alternative to CDP. Their model would create 10,500 part time jobs to be filled by people in remote communities who currently get less than the minimum wage.... The APO NT model would create new jobs and enterprises, strengthen communities and get rid of pointless administration. It has incentives to encourage people into work, training and other activities, rather than punishing people who are already struggling.”](#)

These are the type of changes that STICS in consultation with remote and urban Aboriginal communities want to see happen. These changes and many more are possible in restoring and progressing Aboriginal lives when we demand an immediate Stop to the disastrous NT Intervention, which has caused nothing but oppression and despair.

Please check www.stoptheintervention.org for more information.