



MEDIA RELEASE

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Aboriginal Legal Services and Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT renew calls for the NT Intervention to be overhauled

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) from across Australia and the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT (APO(NT)) have called on the Commonwealth Government, the Opposition, the Greens and Independents to work together to prevent the NT Intervention from becoming both a lost opportunity and a significant policy failure.

Following a meeting in Alice Springs on 28 October 2010, the ATILS and APO(NT) have released an issues paper highlighting the ongoing problems with the NT Intervention. The paper will be sent to the Government, Opposition, Greens and Independents to raise awareness of these important issues.

‘The NT Intervention needs a major overhaul if it is going to work to improve the lives of Aboriginal people’, said Norman George, Chairman of the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency.

‘It is unacceptable that such a massive undertaking as the NT Intervention is continuing without an evidence base and is not being properly evaluated or monitored.’

The issues paper also highlights the problems caused by the racially discriminatory nature of the NT Intervention.

‘The racial discrimination that is at the heart of the Intervention is not only offensive to Aboriginal people, but is a big part of why the Intervention is likely to fail’, said Mr George. ‘Policy should be based on evidence, not race. It should be developed with the people it effects, not imposed upon them. Until government commits to working seriously with Aboriginal people we will see the same failures over and over again.’

The ATSILS and APO(NT) called on all members of parliament to re-examine the NT Intervention and take action on 12 proposed recommendations, including:

- Replacing the current income management system with a voluntary system of trigger-based and case-by-case income management.
- Empowering and resourcing prescribed communities to drive solutions to alcohol misuse that are appropriate to the needs of individual communities.
- Delivering a non-discriminatory approach to law enforcement.
- Immediately cancelling the compulsory five-year leases acquired over Aboriginal land
- Taking a new approach to customary law, consistent with Recommendation 72 of the 'Little Children Are Sacred' Report, to see it as a vehicle to empower elders to take responsibility for offending that occurs in their communities.
- Commissioning independent research which considers qualitative and quantitative data in relation to each of the NTER measures, and to make this research freely available to the public.

Media Inquiries:

Jonathon Hunyor

Principal Legal Officer, NAAJA

(08) 8982 5189

0410 359 293