

Statement of Eminent Australians on the continuing damage caused by the discrimination, racism and lack of justice towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, exemplified by the continuation of the Northern Territory Intervention

While the Australian nation deliberates on the future of its relationship with the First Nations of this land, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are focussed on the continuing discrimination, racism and lack of justice, shown towards them by Federal, State and Territory Governments in so many areas.

An obvious example is the failure of ten years of Federal Government INTERVENTION in the Northern Territory where 73 remote Aboriginal communities (and hundreds more in homelands in hinterlands) remain subjected to discriminatory legislation that no other Australian citizen endures in its crushing totality.

The signatories to this statement support the recent demands by Northern Territory Elders for an immediate repeal of the Intervention measures, some of which were strengthened and extended for ten years in 2012, by the misleadingly renamed ‘Stronger Futures’ legislation.

We support the calls by Elders in their [June 29th 2017 statement](#) for an end to government control of community living areas and the return of community control of housing, employment and local governance.

We also support their insistence on an apology and their right to determine their futures and distinctive pathways.¹ First Nations’ voices have been increasingly ignored since the abolition of ATSIC in 2004 and the Intervention in 2007 and conditions have deteriorated.

It is time that Federal and Territory politicians acknowledged the independent assessments² that the Intervention measures continue to fail³ and the necessity of establishing genuine self-determination and community control. All Australian citizens, black and white, are entitled to the adequate provision of services on an equitable needs basis; Indigenous people living at remote communities and on homelands have been neglected for far too long.

Aboriginal leaders are calling on governments to work with them on genuine partnerships that will see productive remote employment programs without the threat of punishment and loss of income and impoverishment; or attempts through social engineering to force people to move to larger townships and abandon their ancestral lands. The undue pressure placed on elders and communities by governments forced leases over their lands in exchange for basic services and housing must cease.

The unfair discrimination of compulsory income management and now CDP⁴ have been costly failures. It is time to return dignity and human rights to Indigenous peoples living in remote Australia.

The damage to Aboriginal families and whole communities from ten years of draconian control measures has accelerated child removal, suicide and the Indigenous incarceration rate.⁵ This can only be reduced through self-determination, community healing programs based on sound local cultural practices and an end to government legislated discrimination and intrusion into the lives of families.

¹ <http://www.respectandlisten.org/uploads/downloads/Misc/Elders-Statement-10yrs-NTER-29-6-17.pdf>

² <http://www.monash.edu/law/research/centres/castancentre/our-research-areas/indigenous-research/the-northern-territory-intervention/the-northern-territory-intervention-an-evaluation>

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-14/closing-the-gap-report-card-failing/8268450>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/feb/08/northern-territory-intervention-fails-on-human-rights-and-closing-the-gap>

⁴ <https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/adiblog/2017/03/14/botched-govt-employment-scheme-impoverishes-30000-indigenous-australians/> See also, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/15/300000-fines-levied-on-participants-in-remote-work-for-dole-program>

⁵ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-26/nt-incarceration-data/7660810>

Great damage has been done.⁶ We need to be serious about respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voices. We need to heed their calls for equality, including regional agreement making, sovereign treaties and the proper recognition of their long-denied rights.

We call on the Australian government to heed the call of Northern Territory Elders for an immediate end to the racism and discrimination of the Intervention policies which are an ongoing stain on the Australian nation. It is time that Australian governments respect and negotiate with remote living Indigenous people in good faith, demonstrate proper duty of care to them and allow all First Nations of Australia the right to self-determination.

Signatories,

Angie Abdilla, Trawlwoolway woman, CEO *Old Ways, New*.

Peter Abrehart, Chairperson, Melbourne Unitarian Church.

The Rev Dr Peter Adam, OAM, Vicar Emeritus of St Jude's Carlton.

Professor Jon Altman, AM, FASSA, HFRSNZ Emeritus Professor, the Australian National University and research professor Alfred Deakin Institute, Deakin University, Melbourne.

Uncle Bob Anderson, Ngugi Elder, Quandamooka, SE Qld.

Dr Robert V Anderson OAM, DUniv.

Dr. Thalia Anthony OAM, Associate Professor in Law, University of Technology Sydney.

Brigid Arthur csb, co-founder of the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP).

Eunice Aston, Ngarrindjeri Elder, Chairperson of Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority - Leader of the Ngarrindjeris.

Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson, Jiman and Bundjalung woman with Anglo-Celtic and German heritage. Writer, educator, researcher. Patron of We Al-li Trust. Member of Harvard Global Mental Health Scientific Research Alliance.

Wendy Bacon, Journalist and Researcher, Board Member Pacific Media Centre. Contributing Editor New Matilda. Former Director and Professor of Journalism Program, University of Technology Sydney.

Hans Baer, Principal Honorary Research Fellow, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne.

Sherry Balcombe, Co-ordinator Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Victoria. A Queensland Western Yalanji /Okola woman

Dr Jennifer Balint, Senior Lecturer in Socio-Legal Studies in Criminology, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne. Minutes of Evidence Project.

Virginia Balmain, Past President, United Nations Assoc Qld 2004-2013, Hon Life Member. Public Relations Manager, Australian Red Cross Sth Australia. Past, State Manager, Austcare Qld, Qld & NT Development Manager Outward Bound. Hon C'wealth Secretary, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Australia.

Bronwyn Bancroft, Artist, Designer & Illustrator.

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Greg Barns, Barrister, Former National President Australian Lawyers Alliance.

Tony Barry, Australian actor.

Bianca Beetson, Artist, Acting Program Director, Contemporary Indigenous Art, Griffith University.

⁶ "The debilitating aftermath of 10 years of NT Intervention", Jon Altman, Land Rights news-Northern edition,(July 2017), pp18-19.

Professor Larissa Behrendt, Eualeyai/Kamilaroi woman, writer, academic. Professor of Indigenous Research, & Director of Research at Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney.

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Melissa Brickell, Yorta Yorta, Ulupna and Wiradjeri Woman, Artist, Writer, Opening The Doors Foundation Trustee, Member Reconciliation Victoria, Stolen Generations Advocate.

Dr Alison Broinowski, Vice President of Australian War Powers Reform, Vice President Honest History, and former Australian diplomat.

Richard Broinowski, President, Australian Institute of International Affairs, New South Wales, writer, and former Australian Ambassador.

Bob Brown, MBBS (Sydney) Former Senator and Leader of the Australian Greens.

The Hon. Sally Brown AM, first female Magistrate and Chief Magistrate in Victoria, former Justice of the Family Court of Australia, and former Chair of the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Rev Dr Chris Budden, National Coordinator, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (Uniting Church).

Julian Burnside AO QC, Barrister, Human Rights Advocate, former president Liberty Victoria, 2004 winner HREOC Human Rights Award, 2007 Australian Peace Prize, 2014 Sydney Peace Prize.

Samuel Bush-Blanasi, Chairman, Northern Land Council.

John Butler, Singer, songwriter and music producer.

Alison Caddick, Academic, Arena Publications and *Arena Magazine*.

Dr Helen Caldicott MBBS, FRACP, physician, author, and anti-nuclear advocate.

Emeritus Professor Joseph A. Camilleri OAM, La Trobe University.

Rev. Dr. Wes Campbell, former leader of Social Justice in the Uniting Church.

Ken Canning, Burruga_Gutya, Activist and poet, of the Kunja Clan of the Bidjara Nation in South West Queensland.

Kev Carmody, Singer Songwriter.

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Professor Paul Chandler, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Foundation Director Early Start, University of Wollongong.

Vicki Clark, Mutthi Mutthi / Wamba Wamba, Westpac's '100 Women of Influence' 2015.

David Claudie, Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju Traditional Owner Custodian, CEO/Chairman Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation. Cape York Peninsular.

Judith Clingan AM, Composer, Conductor and multi- arts educator.

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Grace Ellul, Congregational Leader of Marist Sisters.

The Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC, Australian reformist lawyer, former and first Chief Justice Family Court of Australia, first female judge of an Australian Federal Court, and first Australian to be elected to the UN Human Rights Committee.

Dr John Falzon, Chief Executive Officer of the St Vincent Paul Society National Council of Australia.

Cathy Freeman OAM, Olympic Gold and Silver Medallist, Australian of the Year 1998, Member of the IOC Sport & Active Society Commission 2016, Co-Founder & Director Cathy Freeman Foundation.

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Nyomba Gandangu, Gong-ganmirr - Convenor for Yolngu Nations Assembly.

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Rodney Hall AM, Multiple award winning author.

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Moy Hitchen cfc.

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Shane Howard AM, Writer and Musician.

The Huddleston Family - Mick, Meg, Dale, Linda and Mark. Artists & Musicians. Burrunjy Art Gallery, Canberra.

Peter Hudson, Artist.

Harold Hunt OAM, Elder, Author and Aboriginal community counsellor.

Bishop D Eugene Hurley DD, Bishop of Darwin, Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Graeme Innes AM, former Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner.

Hon. Dr. Barry Jones AC, FAA, FAHA, FTSE, FASSA, writer, former Federal ALP Science Minister and National President ALP.

Professor Nicholas Jose, Author and Academic.

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Aunty Jean Philips, Aboriginal Christian Leader.

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John Pilger, Journalist, Film-Maker and Author, 2009 Sydney Peace Prize recipient.

Dr Anne Poelina, Nyikina Warrwa Traditional Custodian, (West Kimberley, WA).

Dr Susan Pollard PhD, Jungian analyst, clinical psychologist, psychotherapist.

Brooke Prentis, Aboriginal Christian Leader, speaker, writer, Indigenous justice advocate, Coordinator of the Grasstree Gathering, and Aboriginal spokesperson for Common Grace.

Clinton Pryor, 'Spirit Walker', Wajuk, Balardung, Kija and Yulparitja man from Western Australia. Just days away from completing the *Walk For Justice* from Perth to Canberra.

Professor Joseph Pugliese, Research Director, Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies, Macquarie University.

Nellie Muldhari Rankine, Ngarrindjeri Artist and Author.

Henry Reynolds, Renowned author, Adjunct Professor, School of Humanities, University of Tasmania.

Molly Reynolds, Film director and actor.

Archie Roach AM, Singer, songwriter, guitarist. 2013 Deadly Award for Lifetime Contribution to Healing the Stolen Generations.

Dr Juliet Rogers, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, School of Political Sciences, Melbourne University, Adjunct Professor at Griffith Law School, Qld. Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow.

Dr Gabrielle Russell-Mundine, Academic.

Sinem Sabam, Co-Director of the film, *Our Generation*.

Scott Sanders, CEO Common Grace.

Tauto Sansbury, Narungga Elder, long term Aboriginal Advocate, Chair of 29 SA Native Title groups, Dr Yunipingu National Indigenous Human Rights Award 2015, National NAIDOC Male Elder Lifetime Achievement Award, Centenary Medal for Advocacy re Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 2003.

Professor Chris Sarra, Professor of Education, University of Canberra, Founding Chairman, Stronger Smarter Institute Limited.

John Schumann, Singer, songwriter, musician, social justice campaigner. Leader of bands *Redgum* and *Vagabond Crew*.

Dr. David Scrimgeour AM, Medical Director, Spinifex Health Service, Tjuntjuntjara.

Anne Sgro, President Union of Australian Women.

Barbara R. Shaw, of the Kaytetye/Arrernte/Warlpiri/Warumungu peoples. Long term human rights campaigner against the Northern Territory Intervention, former co-chair of the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance.

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Rev Ian Smith, Executive Officer Victorian Council of Churches.

Professor Fiona Stanley AC, FAA, FASSA, Telethon Kids Institute, Distinguished Research Professor University of Western Australia, Vice Chancellor's Fellow, University of Melbourne.

Gordon Syron, Artist and activist.

Elaine Syron-Perot, Photographer.

Dr Helen Szoke, Chief Executive, Oxfam Australia.

Professor Colin Tatz AO, Visiting Professor in Politics and International Relations at ANU, and a director of the Australian Institute of Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Ian Thorpe OAM, Olympic Swimming Champion.

Dan Tout, Lecturer in history and sociology Federation University, managing editor and editor of Arena Journal.

Professor Gillian Triggs, Vice Chancellor's Fellow Melbourne University, immediate Past President of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Patricia Turner, CEO National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

The Honourable Frank Vincent AO QC, Former Judge, Appeal Supreme Court of Victoria, human rights advocate

Ian Viner AO QC, Former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 1975-1978 (Malcolm Fraser Government - instituted the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) during his ministry.

John Waldron, Senior curator, artist and former President, Museums & Galleries Australia, Queensland.

Natalie Wasley, Beyond Nuclear Initiative.

Brian Walters QC, Barrister and Human Rights advocate. Former President of Liberty Victoria (2004-6).

Dr Sue Wareham OAM, Vice-President, Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia).

Dr Lilla Watson, a Kungalu and Birra Gubba woman, visual artist, prominent Elder, activist, feminist, and academic. Doctor of the QUT, and former visiting fellow across Australian Universities 'Aboriginal Perspectives', co-founder The Black Card.

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Sam Watson, Community Elder Brisbane.

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Alexis Wright, Author and Distinguished Research Fellow, Western Sydney University.

Ursula Yovich, Singer, actor and playwright.

Arnold Zable, Writer, storyteller, educator and human rights advocate. Former President PEN Melbourne: Promoting literature-Defending freedom of expression.

Mark Zirnsak, Director, Justice & International Mission Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Uniting Church in Australia