

STOP THE INTERVENTION

Today marks twelve years of the Northern Territory Intervention depriving Aboriginal people of their basic human rights.

The alliance of 'concerned Australians' supports Aboriginal voices in the Northern Territory, articulated in this [open letter](#) from the Intervention Rollback Action Group (IRAG) in Alice Springs to the Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians.

The ongoing loss of community control, pressure to sign over land, humiliating and discriminatory income management, increased removal of children from families, excessive policing and over-incarceration are among numerous devastating consequences

The Honourable Alastair Nicholson AO, RFD, QC, former Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia, proposes an immediate measure to reduce the alarming number of Indigenous children held in custody by raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Jeff McMullen AM, journalist and film maker, says the accumulative impact of extending the harsh Intervention measures under the so-called *Stronger Futures legislation* has been accompanied by an increase in suicide and the removal of children from families at a rate surpassing the Stolen Generations policy disaster.

The letter to Minister Ken Wyatt from Barbara R. Shaw, Elaine Kngwarraye Peckham and others in the Alice Springs group of Aboriginal Voices calls on government to veto further removal of Aboriginal children from their families, bring home those already taken away and increase support for community initiatives for children at risk.

One of Australia's leading analysts on the impacts of the Northern Territory Intervention, Professor Jon Altman AM, of the School of Regulation and Global Governance at the Australian National University, says: "12 years on it is clear that political and bureaucratic elites who deployed the military intervention promised so much and have delivered very little. According to official figures there are higher levels of poverty in NT communities today than when the discriminatory measures were imposed in June 2007. Only 3 in 10 adults of working age are in paid employment. Some are required to work 25 hours a week for *Newstart* under the Community Development Program (CDP) at pay rates half the current minimum award. Penalties under CDP now exceed 500,000 and many of the most heavily penalised regions are in the NT. Expensive and demeaning Income Management continues even as more research (some sponsored by government) shows no evidence of positive impact. As well as the closure of many community organisations, the paternalistic and heavy handed approach has subjected Aboriginal residents of remote communities to excessive surveillance and forms of 'bureaucratic torture' by Centrelink and CDP 'providers'. The ANAO Report released this week shows that many elements of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy are not being evaluated by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet five years after implementation. So much for sound governance."

‘concerned Australians’ support the calls of the **Intervention Rollback Action Group**.

What needs to happen

Repeal of Northern Territory Intervention/Stronger Futures laws

- *Empowerment of Aboriginal communities through local governance*
- *Support for people to live on their homelands*
- *Inclusion of First Nations history and learning of local Aboriginal languages in all education systems; encouragement and support for bilingual education*
- *Justice reinvestment; shut youth prisons, raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14*
- *Increased and ongoing funding for housing; community control over housing and local employment on building programmes*
- *Jobs programmes to suit community needs devised by communities*
- *Scrapping of income management – transition to voluntary basis*
- *Veto on removal of Aboriginal children; bringing back children already taken; working with communities and families and supporting community initiatives to care for children at risk*
- *Lifting the ban on customary law*
- *Action on Alcohol Management Plans which have stalled in Canberra for years*
- *Restoration of funding taken from Aboriginal organisations; cease funding non-government organisations to do the work that Aboriginal organisations can do*
- *Recognising that sovereignty has never been ceded; enabling Treaty processes to be set up and run by First Nations people*
- *Incorporating the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into law and using it as a tool for working with First Nations people*

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