

## **13 YEARS OF FAILED NT INTERVENTION: FIRST NATIONS DEMAND THEIR SOLUTIONS**

On-line Zoom Forum - Friday 19th June 2020,

### **Yingiya Mark Guyula MLA**

(transcript of full conversation / YouTube found directly [here](#) <sup>i</sup>)

**44:07 Introduction** by Facilitator Professor Larissa Behrendt AO,

Now it's my great pleasure to ... introduce .. Yingiya Guyula who is a member of the legislative assembly. Very ground-breaking in terms of advocacy , particularly around a treaty . A very strong voice from the Territory that's being heard right around the country. He is a Liya Dhalinymirr senior leader from the Djambarrpuyngu - sorry, so sorry about my Eualeyai -Kamillaroi pronunciation my brother. But deepest respect for the work you are doing.

**48:10** He was elected to the Northern Territory parliament in 2016 as an Independent member. So that in itself is really strong support from people and has been a really, really strong voice against the Northern Territory Intervention and the Stronger futures for many years and has worked hard to create inclusive laws and policies during that time. But also, his work has been very forward looking as well, with very , focussed around a treaty and partnership with government and respect for the authority of Aboriginal Nations across on the country, particularly the Northern Territory. So, it is my pleasure to now hand you to Yingiya... [technical issues...]

### **Yingiya Mark Guyula MLA**

Hello

**46:38**

Yo, Thank you very much Australia, [after technical issues] getting myself unmuted...

**46:44**

Good evening everyone. I'm calling from the town of Nhulunbuy in Arnhem Land. Nhulunbuy is I believe the home of Rirratjingu Clan, one of thirteen immediate Clans, but there are other clans around the top end along the Arnhem Land coast. So, this is thirteen years since the Intervention have come into our communities, and what has happened in our communities during the Intervention.

**47:30**

I was on one of the communities when the Intervention came through during that time, watching, and it came right in in front of me. And I was, I was there when the first wave of police, army, Norforce arrived and I saw it all happen. I was there. And I even came and went and offered my assistance to try and help, and which we were all not sure what the good thing was going to be coming out of this Intervention. People thought it was time to build our communities and make it stronger and and prosper our future for our people. That's what everyone was all excited about in our communities, watching everything come in onto land. But then we started off helping out and I stood there in between the people, in the community and the government, or the Intervention, and did a interpreter in 2007.

**48:48**

They came, and the children that we had then was well behaved and had a good discipline. And health checks were done in in a kind of a ,a ... movable hospital type tent that we brought in or that they brought in and built next to the Community Health Centre that was there already. And so, we helped them and there were no checks... there were checks done with the teenagers. They were all at this stage lookin' at 15 years or 16 years older kids, and there was not much or no active ST or sexual active in the community, it was because the children were living in communities that were really well behaved, and people had their own powers how to look after, and look after their

children. Especially, our Elders had power and strength, and knew what to do, and how to look after our young people.

### **15:13**

Straight after that, a year later, in 2008, I had to move to Darwin where I was offered a job at Charles Darwin University [CDU], and worked there in with Yolngu Studies, studying languages of Yolngu people in Arnhem Land and East Arnhem Land, and as was a lecturer, senior lecturer working there.

### **50:44**

And later on, in 2008/2009, I went, returned back to a communities and to go back home on funerals or other, other occasions, or on trips that I went back to do, took the students from CDU to go and meet with people on country. And then I saw negative changes happening. Our elders, our senior leaders, parents and everyone had been undermined and told they were not, not doing their right thing in their way. Everybody seemed to be in confusion that we started to be impacted by what had hit us through this Intervention that came through. And people were really confusion and children could start to talk back, swear back at parents, and seen unusual things happening to our children. And that was the outcome of the Intervention that came through.

### **52.03**

This was also a push for an assimilation through the, through the, by the Northern Territory Government, which was facing a...in for... the Super Shires that came in and took over our community, took over our community councils, which we weren't aware of and soon we found out that we were under the hands of shires, Supershires, and community councils in our local councils were no longer there! We had a big council through the Shire Councils in places like Nhulunbuy or Jabiru in other places looking after affairs for our community. That was also a kind of a confusion to our people, through that.

### **53.09**

So, here I was in Darwin, teaching and disciplining through the Yolngu Studies classes, teaching non-indigenous about our, our Indigenous law and, and culture and system of governance works in our communities. I have since then, I went digital which through Skype and all other technology that enabled me to teach people around... Australia around the country; and I had a few students around the world; Japan, Germany, in the States, there were classes that were learning about Indigenous culture and they were doing very well understanding what, what Yolngu law and governance all works about in the, ..in living on country.

### **54:16**

But it was when, when we started to go back home, our children were behaving, like I said, behaving in a mysterious way, that, that all discipline, respect and empowerment, our Elders were undermined taking the powers off. There were people that our Elders were just sitting, sitting in corners watching.

### **54:44**

**Some** of the effects that came through, people started to enrol brought in and was signing in for work of dole or work for the dole. CDP, was taken out of CDEP used to work on homelands and in communities, were projects that used to run. But everybody, the government then, through the Intervention said, everybody needs to come in and, and sign into what they call 'work for the dole'. And when they came in, everybody came in, all our countrymen, Yolngu, came in and said 'This is my, my certificate which I gained during, while I was working in in communities through the community council and the local government, and how things were done. We are, I've been doing

an apprenticeship' and people said, 'I have a certificate which I am a qualified plumber working here, a tradesman'. And some of them were working as, in administration, in in offices. But through Intervention they said 'You won't be needing this. You need to sign up another form within, with the Centrelink here to achieve white card then called, white card or yellow Ochre card to, so that you can work on, for the dole. Sign up on Centrelink and come every day to Centrelink and sign up which disabled everybody. If I would have been there that time or if before I went away to Darwin, I would have, I would have said 'I am a aircraft maintenance engineer'. And I'm sure that I would have been told 'No, you won't be needing this anymore. You need to sign to work for the dole.'

**56:54**

That's how this Intervention has, has kind of crippled us, and its taken authority and, and, and power off our people. So, on homelands, this is homelands, is an a clan estate, it's a home that where people live healthy on country. This is where we were living - CDEP projects were on country after the 1975 ... movement, homeland movements were established. That people went back onto their countries to create work businesses, grow vegetation , grow fisheries, farming, horticulture, whatever. It was going very well. But then the Intervention comes through and everything is shut down in, in the homelands, and everybody were forced to come into major hub communities.

**58:03**

And, of course houses were through the, through the Stronger Futures that we will building, replacing these houses, they are no, no good so that they can be cyclone-proof. But what they did was they removed all the four-bedroom, five-bedroom, six-bedroom houses and replaced them with two-bedroom, three-bedroom houses. And that's including to ... to accommodate those people who come in from the homelands, and it's been overcrowded since the time when the Stronger Futures came through. So, we've been struggling about this for all the time and now we are living **in crisis right now.**

**58:59**

Since the, since the ... we have lived since then, since the Intervention, has lost our authority, or our, made us lose our authorities, place where our Elders and people, leaders, people on the ground have lost to make our, how we could make decision-making for ourselves, for the people, so that we could decide what is best for our children, what is best for our communities, what is best for our future. Where do we need to go from here?

**59:44**

Instead it was replaced by a **decline in employment, and increase in court hearings, incarceration rates, increase in child removals and suicides. It is a cultural genocide that has happened.** And, , **and that is why I am fighting for self-determination, for Treaty, a space where, and, or whatever that gives power back to the communities** to the Elders, to our Clans, to regain control and improve the future of our children. So, that we clearly see the pathway and create the pathway where our future children, our generations is goin' to go where they have been, and where we have been, where we are now and where we want to see our children to journey so that they prosperously maintain the identity and the dignity of children that we want them to be when we are no longer there with them.

**1:00:56**

**We want to, we want the removal, we want the blanket of the Intervention, and I say again, I want the blanket of the Intervention REMOVED so that we can have that breathing space again, so that we can be who we are.** So that we can be human beings to maintain the, the future generations. So, this is what we have been doing, this is what we have been going on with.

[...technical questions over loss of video image ....]

**1:01:55**

This is what we have been fighting for, This is why we have been fighting for.

**1:02:03**

In the, since then, when the Stronger Futures came through and at 2011, I decided to come back because and leave Darwin classroom of balanda students and I said the behaviour of our children in the communities are not the same as any more, so I need to go back and help my Elders so that we can try and fix what has caused this and tryin' to work on this. So when I got back home we have seen, I met with Elders who were starting to talk about 'Let's try and work on this and let's try and petition the government to stop this Intervention, to stop this Stronger Futures, it is just disempowering our people, it has just taken powers off our leaders. So I started working together with them, and we started to form an, a Yolngu Nations Assembly. Yolngu Nations Assembly which we could advocate with the government.

**1:03:12**

And during that time, 2015, the elections were coming up, and I said to myself 'Maybe I'll try and get a bit higher where I can start advocating with the government. So, I decided to run on the 2016 election. **And I won on the platform of Treaty.** And that's how I got, got here. This is not something that I want or enjoy working, but I have to be brave to stand here, to, to come up here, not knowing where I am heading. But I'm, I'm just standing here to call **'Stop that blanket of the Intervention, and roll back, roll back the Stronger Futures and the policies, the colonial system of looking after trying to ... stand all over us. Let us, we want to be who we are, we want to see where our people are going to, into.**

**1:04:27**

**We need the government to step back and we need an apology, today. We need an apology for what has happened. This is not a, an area, this is not the people we want to be. We, we can think for ourselves, we can determine for ourselves. We can create things for ourselves, we can work and understand. We would rather want to make that a pathway. Let's Balanda and Yolngu work together, let's balanda and Yolngu make a pathway where we both walk together alongside – 'not assimilated'.**

**1:05:04**

**Do not manipulate us to be under your system of law.** But Yolngu Rom Ngurrungu. And we stay with Yolngu Rom Ngurrungu. Which is a Yolngu ways, first within our system and you have your Balanda Rom Ngurrungu. But do not let us be under your system of law. **This is where we, I strongly declare that we need apology, we need apology. My people and I need apology, right around the Northern Territory, right around Australia. So that we can be living and so that we can change policies that starts with genuine self-determination and the acknowledgement of, of our sovereignty and who we are.** Thank you. 1:05:56

Closing remarks from Yingiya below at **1:34:50**

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1:05:58 **Larissa Behrendt** [re upcoming August 2020 Northern Territory Elections]

Thank you, I'm sure that thunderous applause. Thank you so much.

Now, I think that one of the important points that both Aunty Pat and Uncle Harry made was the importance of listening to people on the ground and having First Nations people leading in these issues. And, no better place than to do that than try and shake up parliament .

So, while you might be in encouraging and thankful for listening to Yingiya Mark Guyula's voice there can I also remind you -this isn't his plug but my plug for him - that he is running for re-election in the Northern Territory in 2020... so if yes... So, can I encourage you, if you feel inspired by his words and what he is doing and his vision. That you can go and look at the video and donate at <https://www.yingiya.net/> and I'm sure somebody's going to pop that in the chat section for us so that you've got that to support the campaign to keep this very important voice there for the people of Northern Territory. Thank you so much. 1:07:14

**Closing Remarks** ( at end of full conversation)

**Yingiya Mark Guyula MLA**

**1:34:50**

Just, where, we are here now and where do we go from here? And we'd like to. I've in the Parliament I've gone as far as I could, up in the Parliament, to fight this Intervention, to stop it. Where are the ears in these politicians? In the, in the Northern Territory government is plagued by two major parties, the ALP and the CLP, and they're not working for us, they're not supporting us. And I have to be frank in, in this. And I know I walk into the Parliament and I wanted to tell the people 'We are, it's sickening, we are being damaged, our lives are being damaged, our our children are being scattered, taken away and incarcerated... Elders, people in the community...**Stop it. Help us stop it.**

**1:35:58**

And, and at this stage I've run into a, it seems like I run into a, a dead end on the road. Where do I go from here? **Have we got outside people, or lawyers, or those people who knows how we can tackle this problem, how do we actually go and sit down with Governments? With the Federal Government to roll back the Intervention, to get those freedoms back,** [Harry Nelson adds Yes] **to have that space.** Where do we go from here? **Who is going to be standing with us?** I'm sure, I believe there is *a way* that we can work toward. **Treaty is one of the reasons.** [Barbra Shaw nods yes]. I know, living in Arnhem Land, people down south maybe, or wherever, say, Treaty is not going to happen, this that and the other. But I want to tell brothers and sisters that **Treaty has happened to us in the Arnhem Land, East Arnhem Land, when we had trades with Maccassans,**[Barbara Shaw nods in affirmative][ **there was Treaty, Treaty happened then. So, it's possible that it can happen. But we need to work together to get that problem...**

**1:37:10**

...sadly, just knocking our head on the. . I come into the Parliament, and now I've run into a brick wall and trying to hit, hit my brain on the wall trying, someone let me go in. But we've got to try some other way of trying to get closer to the Government and create. And, that something is something that we need to work on, and I don't have the answer, but, we, I'm going to try them. But I believe there *is* an answer, there is a gap there, where we can work towards. That's all.

1:37:45

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[To Find out more about Yingiya Mark Guyula MLA, 2020 August re-election campaign

- Go to <https://www.yingiya.net/>
- donate <https://www.yingiya.net/donate.php/>
- or direct transfer <https://www.yingiya.net/banktransfer.php> ]

<sup>i</sup> **13 years of failed NT Intervention - First Nations people demand their solutions** , 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Full zoom conversation ((1 hour 48 minutes) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-ypjehkCiM&feature=youtu.be> .

2 minute video excerpt from 'The Point' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XU3Gs9wW3M&feature=youtu.be>

Related Joint cA -IRAG -STICS media release [here](#) /

[http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/media/13\\_Year\\_NT\\_Intervention\\_Forum-MR-19-6-20.pdf](http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/media/13_Year_NT_Intervention_Forum-MR-19-6-20.pdf)

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