

ACTU Resolution – Howard’s Intervention in to NT Indigenous Communities

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) recognises urgent need for Governments to deal *adequately and appropriately* with the issue of violence in Aboriginal communities, particularly violence against children.

We recognise and understand the profound impacts that the history of colonisation in Australia has had and is still having on its Indigenous people.

We also recognise and understand that substance abuse contributes in a profound way to violent behaviour, including abuse of children which occurs all too often in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities alike and that violence and substance abuse is all too often linked to poverty and disadvantage.

We acknowledge the work of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders, both women and men, who have advocated tirelessly at community, state and national levels for an urgent response and intervention from Governments of all persuasions to the national crisis of the abuse of Aboriginal children.

Whilst we acknowledge the sense of urgency in which the Howard Government has responded to the ‘Little Children Are Sacred’ (Anderson-Wild report), we express our deep concern about the nature of their plan to intervene in, and take control of, remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in its current form.

All expert evidence and advice, and indeed the report that this intervention was based on, tells us that centrally imposed ‘quick fixes’ by a remote bureaucracy in Canberra or any other capital city in Australia, will not work.

We support the Northern Territory Government resistance to the linking of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to the child protection issue.

We call on the Howard Government:

- To work with Indigenous leaders at community, state and national levels to further refine their plans;
- Develop long-term solutions and strategies for addressing these issues, including the provision of cross-cultural awareness programs for all employees and volunteers engaged in this process;
- Consult widely on the nature of any changes to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory);
- Provide adequate resources to enable the building of social and physical infrastructure.
- Revisit the notion of a national and representative Indigenous body to interface with Government on these matters.

We call on the ALP and other opposition parties to:

- Work with Aboriginal leaders and communities in the Northern Territory to lobby the Government to address their concerns;
- Work with Aboriginal people to develop a comprehensive policy on Aboriginal Affairs to take to the 2007 election, including the establishment of a national representative Indigenous body.

The NTEU will:

- Support Indigenous and non-Indigenous members in terms of provision of information and networking opportunities around this issue;
- Support Indigenous communities in terms of provision of information and networking opportunities around this area;
- Call on union members working in those areas affected by this plan to consult widely with the Indigenous leadership locally and work with them to assist to address their issues.