

DRAFT DOCUMENT

(This document has been drawn up by the Intervention Rollback Action Group, based on research and consultation with people impacted by the Intervention. A process is now under way of consulting with prescribed area communities and others for further input.)

Rebuilding from the ground up - an alternative to the NT Intervention

The NT Intervention has been a disaster for Aboriginal communities.

Despite the unprecedented investment of more \$1.5 billion, conditions keep getting worse. Government statistics show incarceration rates have risen to almost 30 per cent, school attendance is down in many places, suicide and self harm have increased and thousands of jobs have been lost as CDEP closes down. There are growing crises in urban centres such as Alice Springs as large numbers move in from the bush.

The suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act to seize land, assets and authority has destroyed trust in government and many well run programs. Alongside the Intervention, the NT government has introduced policies guided by the same approach of paternalism and assimilation including dissolving Aboriginal Community Councils, effective cuts to homelands and smaller communities, and bans on bilingual education.

Urgent measures are needed to restore community control, rebuild Aboriginal initiative and capacity, and improve shocking living conditions. This must start with repeal of NTER legislation and the clear application of the Racial Discrimination Act to all laws governing Aboriginal communities.

The government must apologise for the pain and damage caused by the Intervention.

Development must be based on principles of self-determination and commitment to Land Rights. Funding must be redirected from government bureaucrats and contractors to programs under Aboriginal community control.

All policies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must comply with the 46 Articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (which Australia now officially supports).

1. Restore Community Governance: Urgently rebuild Aboriginal Community Government Councils. Restore decision making power and administration of municipal services to these councils. Transfer all assets seized by the Shires to the Aboriginal Councils and pay compensation for all other assets sold off by the Shires.

Remove Government Business Managers installed by the Intervention.

Repeal Business Management Area Powers which grant the Minister the capacity for total control over the budgets and direction of organisations receiving Commonwealth funding.

2. Increase government investment in ALL communities: Abandon the 'hub towns' model. Rapid improvements in education, housing, health and community services are required wherever Aboriginal people choose to live – in urban areas, remote communities and on homelands.

3. Jobs with Justice: Create a new Aboriginal employment program to replace Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) that have been gutted through recent reforms which are exploiting Aboriginal workers. Jobs created must pay at least award wages, with rights to join unions and collectively bargain. The program must be administered by community based organisations, with development needs and priorities set through broad community consultation. All willing workers should be employed.

4. No to Township Leases: End compulsory 5-year leases over Aboriginal township land taken through the Intervention. Stop pressuring communities to sign extensions on these leases. Lift the requirement that 40-year leases are signed with the government before housing can be built. Rescind all township leases signed since the Intervention began in 2007.

5. Housing for All: Return administration of housing stock from the NT Department of Housing to local Indigenous Housing Committees **attached to the Community Councils**. Funds for housing construction and renovation currently going to the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) run by government and major constructions firms must be redirected to the local committees.

Funds for new housing must be available to all communities and substandard SIHIP renovations reassessed for further needs. Employment on housing programs should involve 80 per cent Aboriginal workers. Train and employ a permanent housing maintenance team in every community.

6. Empowerment through Education: Stop punitive programs linking welfare payments to school attendance. Reinstate and expand bilingual education programs in NT schools where requested. Invest in training and employment of Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal teachers aides

and ensure they play a central role in curriculum development. Provide resources and employment opportunities to ensure that schools become important centres of community life. Invest in staff, infrastructure and equipment to ensure all remote Aboriginal schools have full time qualified teachers and enjoy the same resources as schools across Australia.

7. Abolish Compulsory Income Management.

8. Community Controlled Social Services: Fund early childhood programs, youth services, men's programs and women's centres, with specific needs determined through the local council.

9. Health: Implement the recommendations of the Health Impact Assessment by the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (2010), which recognises the importance of self-governance, housing, education and cultural respect in determining health outcomes.

Adequately fund health services in all communities. Consult with communities and health service providers to ensure programmes are appropriate and not duplicated. Support Aboriginal managed health services. Fund and train Aboriginal health workers and Aboriginal liaison officers.

10. Non-Discriminatory Alcohol Management: Repeal blanket alcohol bans in Aboriginal communities. Provide resources to allow communities to develop local solutions to alcohol misuse that are driven by and appropriate to the needs of the community. Resource culturally appropriate and accessible alcohol treatment programs in all communities. Broader measures to empower communities, employ Aboriginal people in rewarding work and ensure delivery of basic services are crucial for dealing with problems associated with alcohol.

11. Justice not Jail: End all discriminatory laws that have led to increased police harassment and incarceration of Aboriginal people. This includes race-based alcohol restrictions, the capacity to suspend the need for a warrant to enter premises on Aboriginal land, blanket pornography bans, stigmatising signage in Aboriginal communities and local council by-laws in Alice Springs which target the homeless. Repeal 'star chamber' powers that suspend the right to silence for Australian Crime Commission investigations in Aboriginal communities.

Remove NTER prohibitions on the consideration of Aboriginal customary law in bail and sentencing. Recognise customary law as an important vehicle to empower communities to take responsibility for offending and improve community safety.