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### **The Northern Territory Intervention: Ten years on and what has been achieved?**

As a federal election loomed a decade ago, facing disappointing polls the government of the day was scandalized by sexual abuse in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities and proposed an intervention to improve the life chances of Aboriginal children.

The program won bipartisan support and continued under a new name, *Stronger Futures*, when the government changed. Closing the Gap targets were announced and hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent to improve the health, education, housing and employment status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the country, and especially those living in remote communities.

A decade on, it is timely to consider results:

- The annual *Closing the Gap* report shows that six of the seven targets are not on track.
- We understand that there has not been a single prosecution for child sexual abuse as a result of these programs.
- Aboriginal men have been stigmatized as drunken, irresponsible pedophiles.
- Provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act have been ignored to allow the Intervention to proceed.
- Communities have been weakened by the downgrading of local self-government. Those who presume to know what is best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have had their way.
- Tax payers are askance at the shocking waste of public monies on ineffective programs, for which many blame Aboriginal people.
- Most notably in the Northern Territory, but in the states as well, shocking abuses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander juveniles have been uncovered.
- Incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children have sky rocketed.
- United Nations representatives have issued reports critical of the Intervention and of government relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- The 97 recommendations of the 2007 *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle* (Little Children are Sacred) report have been ignored.

A longer list would add to the inevitable conclusion that there is a crisis in Indigenous Affairs.

“As the national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples calls for a fundamental reset of government and community relations with us, beginning with the implementation of the Uluru Statement resolutions for constitutional reform” said Jackie Huggins, Congress Co-chair. “Congress stands ready to fill the role of the advisory body to parliament.”

“We also call for the immediate implementation of the Redfern Statement, which provides a roadmap for how governments can work collaboratively with us to develop efficient and effective programs” said Rod Little, Congress Co-Chair.

“The rationale for the Intervention was to protect Aboriginal children and to provide them with a better future. Health, education and well-being statistics demonstrate failure of the Intervention. There have been very few positive outcomes to show for the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been spent on the Intervention and related programs,” he said.

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