

SORRY, ABOUT THE



N.T INTERVENTION?



Why the paper?

This paper contains speeches from a workshop that took place at the Tent Embassy on Monday 11th February and from the rally outside Parliament House on Tuesday 12th February. We are printing these speeches because in all the talk of the Apology, an important moment was forgotten and neglected, for the most part, by the larger presses. That is the Convergence that saw over 2000 people rallying outside parliament against the Northern Territory Intervention. For as important and powerful as Kevin Rudd's apology was on the 13th February, to many it is hollow considering that in the Northern Territory there are people still living under a ration and mission system, no different to that which Rudd apologised for. We are printing this as a way of giving that voice a platform from which it can be heard.

We are also printing this because, as non-indigenous supporters, we feel that the best way we can strive for Aboriginal sovereignty is to allow Aboriginal voices to be heard and read unmediated. That this is a way in which ignored voices do not fall on deaf ears. If the politicians and bureaucrats aren't gonna listen, at least us mob out here will. That in sharing these speeches, that we were privileged to hear, we can offer understanding and impart knowledge of a situation that a lot of us from the cities don't get a true view of. That in talking our living history amongst ourselves we bring ourselves more present and alive to the country in which we are living.

We hope that, for those who read this, you get an idea of what the convergence in Canberra was about. In doing so we recognise that the rhythm of the spoken word is a difficult thing to recreate. Voices lose their uniqueness and become somewhat universalised once written down. We hope with a little imagination you can hear the timbre and sorrow of these words. Hear the laughter and applause and the tears. For those interested in hearing these words spoken shoot us an email at seenpress@gmail.com and we'll hook you up with the audio tracks. If you would like to comment likewise shoot us an email at the same address.

"Is your blood red? So's mine, so we are all blood relations! All of us, blood relations! There's only one race, the human race. And humans are doing this to other humans, so we've gotta stop other humans doing it to us. We're one family. And when one side of the family goes a bit crazy and bung we've gotta bindy them up the side of the head because they're not listening. They're not looking. They're talking it up in process and process is about not doing anything.... we've got stop that family wrecking our family."

Tent Embassy Feb 11th 2008



Stop the NT Intervention Rally 12-2-08 Belinda Faulkner



The organisers posing parliament lawns 12-02-08 photo Belinda Faulkner

We sit in front of parliamentarians all the time when they come out to Alice Springs, but it goes in one ear and out the other, from one community to the other to the other. Round in circles. They're not listening to us. We get up and say as much as we can in Alice Springs, that is why we travelled over 3000 km to get here to ask you mob for help.

Barbara Shaw, Tent Embassy Feb 11th 2008

And we're here to tell Kevin Rudd that he's gotta recognise our sovereignty. And we want to get rid of the intervention laws! We've gotta demand that the intervention laws be dropped straight away! Right now! Well its good to see so many people here that have come to the Tent Embassy. We've been waiting for 36 years to see all you mob here, because we've come to finish the business off, once and for all. But first of all we've gotta tell Kevin Rudd he's gotta get rid of the intervention laws! And then he's gotta recognise our sovereignty to our country! Which means that we own from one end of the country to the other end. There's never been any treaty signed in this land. We've been waiting, and we're still waiting. It's good to see everyone here. But if we have to organise another march we want to see thousands and thousands of our people down here to take a stand. It is about our sovereignty. This land is ours. Always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Isobelle Coe, outside Parliament house Feb 12th 2008.

This intervention is a weapon. It's a weapon to break down Aboriginal community, and it's a weapon to break down the cultural maintenance that Aboriginal people have maintained through out past governments.

Walter Shaw, Tent Embassy Feb 11th 2008



Crowd, Parliament lawns photo Belinda Faulkner



The Emergency Response bill.

Eileen Shaw is a grandmother and Alice Springs town camper. Her children, Walter and Barbara Shaw, also town campers, were organisers of the convergence in Canberra and staunch critics of the Intervention in Northern Territory. Eileen speaks here in detail about the Emergency Response Bill and the effects it has had since it's legislation.

"I just wanna go through what that Northern Territory Emergency Response Bill is because that's what we are talking about today. Howard in government passed that bill and there were six things to that bill. It's called: *A National Emergency Measure targeting the protection of Indigenous children*. Tomorrow we celebrate with Stolen Generations peoples the legislation that the government passed down years ago to protect children. We're down here today to support the Stolen Generations and we are also down here today to ask you to support us. Because this intervention in the Northern Territory is to protect children, that's what the government says, but we know different: It's not....

We come from prescribed areas. No where else in Australia will you have a law like this. We're supposed to be equal under one law in Australia but that's not true, after this bill was passed we live under prescribed areas. There are certain laws we have to live under and as Stan says it gives police powers to do what they want under those orders.

Computer audits to protect prohibited pornographic material. My grandchildren ask me "nanna, what's that word?" And we have big signs outside our prescribed areas and it's got no alcohol and no pornographics. We did agree for signs about what the law is, but we didn't agree to the way the signs were put up.

5 year leases to better manage leases and investments and improve living in townships. It was actually to compulsorily acquire land for five years and it's a fact sheet and I think it's important while we've got the time to talk about what the facts is. I came from a town camp. Stanley and Mervyn, we're all town campers, and other members of the Intervention Rollback here are from other communities. Under the Act the Commonwealth Minister now has the same powers as the N.T. Minister to administer, forfeit, breach or resume a town camp lease. He can take leases off us. And the Commonwealth Minister has additional powers to compulsorily acquire town camps without additional notice or process and vest the freehold title in itself. So the leases we fought for 30 years ago, that we fought the government for, we got those leases in our community name, they can come and falsely take that lease off us.

When did the powers start? It started last year in August 2007. And what are the possible problems? The new compulsory powers does not follow the normal rules including noticing leaseholders. So if you've got a lease on your land anywhere in Australia you've got a right to talk through that. We don't have that anymore. That law is still the same as it was last year even though there is a new government. That's why its important for all of us who do support us to say stop this intervention today. The Minister, he can take our land off us, that's for our town camps in the Northern Territory. The five year leases, what is it? All existing leases and others

in communities. The leases give the Australian government right to exclusive possession to repair and demolish any existing structure, to terminate the lease at any time... The people ask us how we live. We live in fear of government coming in and taking our lease. Cos we've been there, you know, years. But they could easily say to us, "well you can move out cos we now own this lease".

Which communities are affected? All those communities that are prescribed areas ... And it is for five years, so even though we might go and give a letter to the Prime Minister, federal government tomorrow, this is not just a fight for today, this is a fight for the future for us.

Pornography, they thought that was an issue. Most of us, most remote communities don't know what that is. And it's not an issue. We know what is right and what is wrong.



NT mob at Tent Embassy 11-02-08 photo Belinda Faulkner

Business managers, this is another issue that the Minister, the federal government, gave new powers over the entities that provide function and services under the business manager's areas.... Most of us are community councils. We're governed by our communities, we have elections and they represent us. This business manager can come into any community and if there is a meeting on he can stop that. Community meeting, he can demand us to leave In our own country.. In our own office.

The minister may universally alter funding agreements. That means we don't have certainty over the funds that we already have in our communities. The Minister may direct where housing services are provided where the Minister is not satisfied with the current service. Direct how assets are used with entities. Most of us own our communities. In our communities there are buildings there. There are office buildings there. Homes; our homes are assets. That's what the government said. They can come in and they can direct and control that asset. Suspend community organisations or appoint managers for associated grounds. The Act also creates civil penalties where entities fail to comply with the directions or to inform of services meetings when its required. And it says what is an entity. That's our community council, our government council.

Where are these business managers? They are in everyone of those 72 prescribed areas. What happened with those business managers? We've been singing out for housings. The government, in less than two months, they prepared full housing for these business managers with six foot high barb wired fences for living in our communities. Welfare, they changed the Social Security Act to introduce this system of income management. Where I come from, we already worked out years ago how we can look after our women and children and how to put food on our women's

and children's tables. We set up a system where they agreed to set aside some part of their own money for a food order system. And that was working well for us. The government came along and what they did, they said anybody who gets government grants, they halve those grants. And they will set those government grants more aside for food than for rent.

Now that caused a lot of concerns and problems for people concerned with that. I've got Kathy Williams here, she's in her 70's, she's an old pensioner, she lives in a prescribed area. She's worked all her life and she's now subject to these welfare reforms the government has put in.

It started last year and is expected to go for 5 years. Community stores... they took over our community's stores. They promised every Aboriginal that they would upgrade those community stores. And they haven't. They've only done one or two and said, "look, we've done a good job for you."

And what they've done, they've made some improvements, but they have gone out with the improvements like they said they would.

The permit system was one thing that all the traditional owners said we want permits on our country, and the federal government did promise on their election they would do something about permits. That was one thing that we were prepared to almost die for. That is protecting our country. Hopefully, Kevin Rudd's government, the Labour Party, they did give a commitment before the election to do something about the permit system.

Publicly funded computers. They said that anybody in your house, in our homes, they can, the police, the Australian Federal Police, have the rights to go into our homes to have a look at whats in our homes. They can have a look in fridge, they lift up our beds see if there's anything there and they can confiscate anything that's in our homes. Something like computers.

Statutory rights in buildings. What the government did is, they didn't do this ad hoc, they worked out exactly how they could take away our rights and leave us with nothing. Statutory

rights in buildings, we've had buildings built on our communities for years and this bill gives them the right to control those buildings. Five year leases, they said this bill that they passed last year, that they will accept the existing leases and other land interests but that they would decide what they were going to do with that. We've fought different governments over the years to get proper leases for our people and what they've done today is make our life a life of uncertainty.

What Stan was talking about is police powers. We did meet with the police and we said to them, this bill here was supposed to protect women and families, and what we've seen now is that police have extraordinary powers. They have the power and right to go into our homes. And they don't need those orders to have the power to go into our homes. If they suspect that there is someone they need to talk to they can walk into their homes. Now we've had police, police action. We said to the police: "We know that you may be looking for someone to talk to but don't you have the right and decency to go to the families first before ntering into their homes?" What they said to us was, "we have the right to enter into your home at anytime if we believe that we need to find somebody there."

And the other thing with police is that there have been raids. We've never been subjected to raids before by police, yet in the last year we've had our community surrounded by police.

No one could get in and no one could get out. What they did was go through people's homes. Barbara and the women of the town camp said "No, that's not the way you should work. You're creating children to fear police." They stopped that, but if we didn't stand up to them and say that's wrong I think they would have gone further. But they do have the right to that if they suspect that there is alcohol, drugs or someone with an outstanding warrant in your home. We did wanna work with the police because its important that we try and stop this, let police know that there's a right way of doing things.

So that's the facts. We got the factual sheet of what the bill means to us today but we are here today to try and make it an open issue. Tomorrow we're hopeful, we're trying to get signs with Stop NT Intervention: Invasion. And that's what we are wanting people to carry tomorrow those signs with Stop: NT Intervention, Invasion. And we will have our banner, that's what well walk behind when we head up to Parliament House."





Not a State

Mauri Japarta Ryan is the grandson of Vincent Lingiari. Like his grandfather, Mauri is a Gurinji man, a community 1600 kms from Alice Springs and 950 Kilometres from Darwin. This is what he had to say about the intervention.

“Why was the intervention put in place? ... Alright, a lot of you people here will ask the same question: why was it put in place? ...

They say because of what happened at Mutajula with children, the Magistrate said things... but I say that is not correct. I'm not denying that children are interfered with. They are interfered with everywhere. There are a lot of these children affected everywhere. By sexual abuse, physical abuse and mental abuse. There's a lot of paedophilia up there in that house called Parliament House, it's just gotta be proven. Police do it. Human beings have been doing it for a long time. A lot of that was brought here since 1770, after Cook. But because the Northern Territory is not a state, it doesn't have the same rights under the Constitution of this country, created in 1901. We are second rate citizens in our own country. That is part of why the intervention is there. Why didn't it happen in New South Wales? Why didn't happen here in Canberra? Victoria?... the whole lot? Why? Because they can't do it. They don't have the power under legislation to overrule the states. Okay, that's the reason why. And if you look under the ground in the Northern Territory, there's masses of uranium. What we've gotta focus on is why this is happening and how it's hurting all those people from Darwin down to the other side of Alice Springs. It's hurting people in a lot of areas.

I'll go to one topic: CDEP. CDEP has gone past it's use by date. Every remote community, and this intervention takes on 72 communities that number of 100 people or more. And it's affecting a lot of people emotionally and physically. People cant afford to live.

This is one of the most racists Acts in legislation since the White Australian policy stopped Asian people coming in. It's very,

very racist! And you know what, the legal system in the Northern Territory and else where is sitting on their arse saying nothing. Sometimes we don't count as Aboriginal people; we don't count at all. These blokes here, they've been talking for ages and ages to each Minister, federally, locally. Our own Aboriginal people who are supposed to represent us say nothing because they are gagged, they can't open their mouths about the intervention. This is really hurting our people.

I say to all the public servants that if every Aboriginal person in this country died tomorrow, there would be two million public servants out of work. You know that? Two million public servants. Its phenomenal. The Aboriginal industry is the biggest single industry in this country.

I'll ask you a simple question now about economics, which we fail to have in our remote communities. Or in our towns. Economics. How much do you think this country has made? It's not millions, it's not trillions, but zillions. Its made the bread thieves of this country very rich. The bread thieves. The corporate thieves. The Packers, the Murdochs, everybody who donates to political parties. They are thieves. While us are land rich and dirt poor. We don't have nothing. We have our lives. I look forward to tomorrow if I'm alive. Or the next morning. Vinnie said 25 years but I'm not going to be here then. This country has not given, not shared, the wealth of this country, which has not been made on the back of the sheep, but this country has made rich on Aboriginal land and sea, which did belong and still does belong to these people.

The intervention now is hurting all of our people. A lot of our people in remote communities and towns are only on CDEP. They don't look forward to superannuation. They don't get it. All you get is old. They have nothing to offer their children. This is what these morons up on the hill here, the political parties, they voted for this because it had to go through Parliament. Don't say the Liberals and the Nationals, the Labour Party agreed to it too. And we all voted for them, not me and a couple of others.

Because there is no Aboriginal person in Parliament up there. Theres eight, sorry,

nine, in all of Australia. Two in Western Australia, six in the Northern Territory, and one in NSW.

It's an indictment on the white people of this country, the forefathers of this country, for not putting Aboriginal people in to Parliament. Because we are talking about your country, ladies and gentlemen, your country which is handed down since time memorial... 60 000 years. Then they have the hide to say, prove you're an Aboriginal. Prove you're an Aboriginal. People come from overseas, get \$10 000 just for showing up. What do we get? We get abused. Physically, mentally and everything. What have you got out of this country? You know what you've got. Jackshit. You are dealt shit sandwiches in other words, that's what you're dealt by people who go up there and pray for good governance. When Parliament starts, they pray for God. I don't have a God, right, cos if you look in the Middle East, he was either a black man or a brown man. That's what a lot of you people have been worshipping. A black or a brown man. This thing here has to be told today, you people, delegates here, that this intervention has to be stopped. When the Senate gets controlled, it's like a train. You can't derail this thing, it just keeps going. Rudd wants this thing to keep going. But you know what, you people gotta open your mouths. Vinnie doesn't want to get up all day... anybody else? Support us! Say that this is the most racially discriminatory Act since the Racial Discrimination Act, plus what you call the White Australia policy, plus the first invasion. That's what you gotta say here. This other jargon I don't understand, I'll read it tonight but it won't make much sense to me.”

“I came this time [also] to hear an apology from a Prime Minister who has a mandate from the Australian people who voted to say sorry. That other moron, the miniature Prime Minister John Howard, he said I'll give you a sincere apology and regret from myself. I walked out and never spoke to him again. And he's got a bloke who worked with him called Rudd. I call him the Malboro man. He rides in town with money and buys communities. Port Keats. Tiwi Island. The leases right, 100 year leases. Guess what? To the people who really understand, we've actually leased the country to you people for 220 years. But Australia's in denial, this country has been in denial, not telling the truth. This country is stolen. That's right. It's stolen.

Stolen children, I am one of them. I don't carry a log on my shoulder, I carry a chip. I want an apology. I want two apologies. One to the stolen generations, and one for all the atrocities inflicted on my people for over 220 years.

All those things. Every one that I read in the paper and text. I don't get to the papers regularly, everyday. The plane only flies once a week into my community. People say I didn't do it, my taxes are not going to pay for this. Guess what. People on the dole pay taxes. White society has to pay back 220 years. This is a very rich country, but only a few people share in it. If you look at why the intervention was put in place, Howard had nothing else to take to the white Australian people in an election. He didn't have a Tampa, he didn't have a Wheat Board, all he had to do was lean back and flog the blacks. And guess what. It failed. Because he couldn't dupe you anymore, right. He was going to try again, on lies based on this thing here. It has hurt people in the Northern Territory. I live in a remote community. There's 72 remote communities. All the town camps, they offer you money, they offer you all this. You can't replace the hurt. Even on Wednesday [the sorry] you will not ease the hurt of a lot of people. It's way overdue. This intervention is still hurting a lot of people. As I was talking to my older brother here, Harry. It's like a train coming through where you belong. You can't derail this train because all the governments are in cahoots with each other. They're in cahoots! And this doesn't benefit Indigenous Territorians. It makes us prisoners in our own country. And like, these people are talking about their monies. How'd you like it if I came to your house and quarantined all the public servants, everyone who makes a wage. Quarantined your wages. Go up to Parliament House on Wednesday and say: 'All you politicians, here's your ticket for \$150, \$50 a ticket. You go and do your shopping in Alice Springs.' How do you reckon they'd feel? And yet they can impose these laws on us. This country has to forgive us. You people have to. We can't forgive you. Well, I can't. But what has to happen is we have to walk together, united. Black, white. There's no such thing as brindle. You are black, white or brown, or you're a different colour. You're not brindle. But we are human beings. What you have to do tomorrow is go together, march together with these cards and say to this mob, take this intervention back because we don't want it.”



Barbara Shaw is a fourth generation Town Camper from Alice Springs. She was one of the main organisers of the convergence in Canberra, raising \$40 000 and hiring a couple of buses

and drivers to get herself and the N.T. mob down to Canberra for the opening of Parliament. She had this to say about the intervention and its mismanagement.

“You see those men, those men over there, they are prescribed area men. They look after their children and they look after their women. They're not paedophiles. They are men of the communities, leaders. Everybody looks up to them. When there's a problem in our communities, we deal with it. What Mal Brough did last year was wrong. He only spoke to a few people in our communities and those are the ones that welcomed the intervention. When I told all my rellies back home in Alice Springs, I fax every community, I talk to people in communities. But what's happening with the business managers is that he's not communicating with the rest of the community below.

I can send something to Yuendumu. This lady's from Yuendumu, those two men are from Yuendumu, Lajumanu, Teatree, Mutjikara. Mutjikara had a tourist enterprise running out there.

The were running on CDEP. As soon as CDEP got scrapped, the enterprise went down and our men were unemployed. Now our men gotta line up at Centrelink and wait for their wages, and they're getting wages out of our cards. Anyone got em in their pockets? We've got ration cards, and they are gift cards. All of our people are lining up at Centrelink. And Centrelink is not sending information out on time, so our people can be fed on our communities.

There was an old man who walked off the station up at Wave Hill because he didn't wanna get paid in vouchers or rations. We don't wanna be paid in vouchers or rations anymore! This takes us back to 1890 when they started the ration days. They talk about our children not going to school. Our children go to mainstream school in town from town camps. Our children go to schools out bush, and yet they are not putting higher education out there for our kids. All those young fellows who go through intiation, they need some training and alternative education. We gotta scrap this intervention. We gotta focus on the real things: that's health, housing and education.

At our council we've been running a food voucher system for nearly 30 years. I don't think he [Mal Brough] liked our food voucher system, because it worked, and it's been working for more than thirty years. He's come out with his little gift cards. And a lot of our people don't have ideas, they're expecting us to walk around in the hot heat up there (it's very hot up there in Alice Springs at the moment), and they gotta walk everywhere from Centrelink, Births Deaths and Marriages, everywhere else in the CBD, and then go 5 kilometres out of town to MVR to get an ID. A photographic ID.

They scrapped the permit system. A police woman in a police car went out to ceremonial grounds where its sacred for men. She jumped out of the car and was looking around. No Aboriginal woman is allowed to go near sacred grounds! These two blokes over here are from Lajumanu, that's the community where the policewoman jumped out the car and went to a ceremonial ground. If any of us went and did that, ya know, we'd be in a whole lot of trouble. What does she get? Slap on the hand.”



Sandbags and brickwalls



Walter Shaw is a fourth generation Town Camper from Mount Nancy Alice Springs. With his sister Barbara, he's been one of the leaders at tempting to re-peal the in intervention. The following is a selection of what Walter had to say during Monday's workshops.

"We're affected by this intervention because we live on what is called a prescribed area. All Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory are now classified as prescribed areas.

Now I'm going to give you a little history of this intervention... John Howard and Mal Brough made a media press release on a Thursday. It was on the 7.30 Report, but that Tuesday Noel Pearson went on there and spoke about welfare reform and land tenure. And there's really no connection with land tenure and welfare reform.

But once the announcement was made on the Thursday we donned up and jumped on planes on the Sunday, and we come down and we went up to the Parliament House and sat down and nussed out aspects of the welfare reform from the media press release that John Howard and Mal Brough put out. From then on we waited a couple of months. A five hundred page bill was passed just up from the road here. And I also come down for that. We sat with half a dozen Senate committees, and basically all these previous politicians, and the ones who got reelected, only had one night to oversee 500 pages. They didn't have a clear understanding or in depth look at the impact that will have on trying to implement this intervention.

But a couple of months have now passed and we're starting to feel some of the effects of this intervention. And it really wasn't any realistic or measurable approach in terms of dealing with the epidemics within our own Aboriginal communities, that stem from the lack of resources, lack of funding. The lack of our proposals, admissions and table talks around the table with government. It always falls on deaf ears.

So basically what we want to do now is, there wasn't any negotiation or consultation with any of us in terms of this intervention. Basically what they done is Mal Brough put his ideology on a piece of paper, passed it through Parliament, it became legislation, and then it was imple

mented. None of us knew what the intervention was going to do. This intervention was done from a child sexual abuse report by the Northern Territory. Once the Federal Parliament got hold of this sexual abuse report, a lot of sexual abuse reports were done on a national scale. There are small pockets in any community in suburbia or metropolitan areas that have people who are offenders in terms of sexual abuse. This is racially vilifying all Aboriginal men as paedophiles!

Now once this bill was passed we had a rally in Alice Springs. And a whole group of Aboriginal communities, town campers, rallied on the front steps of the Chief Minister's, Northern Territory's Chief Minister's office. Now a symbolic gesture was made where all of the Aboriginal women shredded the 500 page bill and burnt it, simply because our women raise our children. Now there's a right way of doing business, and considering that last year was supposed to be a commemorative year for all of us Aboriginal people in this country, our country, we celebrated the 1967 referendum and we celebrated NAIDOC, and yet last year and this year we are still fighting for our future existence...

We want this intervention squashed and we want the Prime Minister elect Kevin Rudd and his Minister for Indigenous Affairs to come down to all Aboriginal communities and do it properly. There's a right way of doing business and there's a wrong way. And this is wrong."

(lack of resources:) "Us guys in the Northern Territory are the most impoverished people in Australia. We're fifteen to twenty years behind the rest of Australia in a lot of areas. Health, education and also jobs as well. And I mean, there's always sandbags and brick walls we hit, and it's not only in the government sector but the public and private sector as well."

(on previous attempts:) "In the Northern Territory, a bit over 25 months ago the Northern Territory and federal Government wanted to enter into sub-leasing agreements. And they wanted to sub-lease a few communities up in the Top End, Alice Springs, Darwin. And the communities I'm talking about are the town camps.

Now the town campers in Alice Springs were dangled a \$60 million carrot. And we had exhausting meetings with both our State government, Territory government, and the Federal government, and there was major oversighting with the negotiations of the sub-leasing agreements. They wanted us to sub-lease our housing stock back to the Northern Territory government so it becomes Government Housing, and then they actually have control of the housing, rent collection, and the land itself. We were to retain the headlands. They had an MOU. Within the MOU they had future development of upgrading pre-existing houses and the development of future houses.

Now our main concern is with the pre-existing houses. A lot of them were formed over 40 years ago, houses were developed on remote communities, on town camps,

these houses are 40, 30 years old. Over time, families grow up, kids get married, so there's a lot of overcrowding within our community that stems from social epidemics within the household, social problems within the house because of overcrowding."

(change:) "Yeah there's a lot of change that happens in the communities whether it be the Aboriginal community or broader Australia or the rest of the world. And there's three changes: there's generational change, attitudinal change and there's social change. So basically all these problematic issues that are happening in the Aboriginal communities are basically all those three areas. The reason why Aboriginal communities have been going in a downward spiral is because of lack of resources, lack of funding and our voices falling on deaf ears."

(CDEP and income quarantine) "They had to do a systematic approach in so far as quarantining people's money. So they had to abolish CDEP, they did not care about the functionality or operational capacity of CDEP. CDEP are individual programs, all individual communities run CDEPs as program managers. So if the CDEPs meet the key performance indicators, made their outcomes, people actually got real jobs. People were cross subsidised by CDEPs and properly funded with whatever the program has. Barbara spoke about essential services such as the old people services. Now if 5 year leases were put on Aboriginal communities and imposed on the town camps, all of the municipal services, all of the essential services, get back-sourced to the local government. Back to our Northern Territory local government, and we have to basically tender for any contracts in terms of any services. And I mean, with programs that are not government mandate we can see what works with the individual, for the community and for the family. So when you look at a systematic approach, a paternalistic approach, it will not work with Aboriginal people. They've tried it! This is another government policy, it's an ideology from people living 3000 kilometres away that aren't in touch with the people who are affected by the consequences of their advice."

(good aspects of intervention) "The reason I said that there are good aspects of the intervention is because they've clearly identified people. They're actually having bureaucrats go out on the ground and identify problematic issues that we are facing, both in health, education and so on and so forth, with the CDEP..."

(motivation and principles) "They're throwing in tens of millions of dollars, and I've always made this comment: it's not a matter about money it's a matter about principle. It's a matter about how people want to live, how people's livelihood basically continues"

(land grab) "When you look at the town camps within the townships, they're prime real estate and that's what they're after. They're after our land. When you look at town camps when they were first developed they were on the outskirts and the fringes of the towns. Now as the town swells up

and grows, we're within eyesight of tourists, anyone living in that town. So they want to move us somewhere else. I don't know where we are going to go."

(police) "Us guys in Alice Springs as town campers, we've got an MOU, Memorandum Of Understanding, with the Alice Springs police. Now that's basically deteriorated since this intervention came out. We've always worked with police. We've worked with problems to do with our own communities, but because these police have got so much powers, they can go in your house, they can look under your pillow, they can go in your fridge, they can go anywhere on your town camp and look for anything. What the Northern Territory government done prior to the Intervention being announced is that they adopted some of the methodology of the federal government intervention and laws. They had a LAWS taskforce and a DVO's taskforce and they are going into people's houses. They don't care what time of the day it is.

A lady, a few months ago, last year, the police went there with two police cars, and there was over ten police officers and this lady was sleeping out the front of her verandah with a blanket over her, and they didn't even announce themselves. They walked straight into the house, pulled the blanket off her, and she's fearful so she grabbed a stick, and they pepper sprayed her, they put her in handcuffs. And this is an ill woman. She took a fit in her handcuffs, they threw her in the back of the police wagon, and took her down to the watchhouse, and they didn't provide any medical assistance whatsoever until our council intervened. Now she's been taken to court for resisting arrest and assaulting police officers.

When you look at the intervention itself, you've got people who are doing the right thing for their families and being providers for their families. This lady looks after her nieces and nephews and whole extended family, and yet she was subjected to the laws that are entailed with this intervention. All of us here are."

(approach to take) "It pisses me off that we all come down here as a group, all from different parts of Australia, and yet we have to come here and justify some of the actions or inactions that we haven't done. Now Mauri Ryan spoke earlier about the Northern Territory not being a state. We all know through the intervention that the Federal Government done within the Northern Territory, they overridden the Government structure of the Northern Territory. Now there's some areas that we can be politically open about and shit-can the government about, but at the end of the day, these people fund us. They fund our services, they fund our community councils, and this things gotta be done smartly. There's a lot of smart people, people that went through the political movements thirty or forty years ago, and also young people like me. This thing isn't done with us shooting our mouths off. Its done using proper strategy and building on bureaucratic terminology. So what I'm saying is that we shouldn't have to justify our actions or inactions, because there are some sandbags and brick walls that cannot allow us to move forward that way."

Indiscriminate Action. ACT now!



Kathleen is from Alice Springs and lives on her country 20 km from Alice. This is what she had to say on the Act and what we should be doing.

(on the Act itself) You see the problem here is that this, as I put it to Jenny Macklin, is an indiscriminate action against all aged persons or people with families. Cos we're going find shortly that just because you're living in sight

or sound of a community you are also income managed. And this has happened at the old timers' home in Alice Springs. Directly out the back we've got the older timers' camp. Some of those people, old timers, in the home have been income, what's the word, quarantined. And me, for the first time in my life, I had to go in and get a voucher, told them it was a ration card. And I don't go in to town. I live 25 kilometres out, and I was told I can get that card and go to my community store. And I go, "where the f is my community store?" Alice Springs. I don't go there, rather not. I live out on my homeland and there I stay, and if I go into town once a month, hoopy do I'll go to the casino.. But, but, listen to me, no, all you mob here, how indiscriminate this Act is, my aged cousin, bachelor, never married, lived on his land there, he's on this bloody thing, quarantine business. Hasn't got a family, hasn't got a thing, lives on the back of his settlement. My cousin's sister rang up last night, what's happened to her money? She can't pay

her electricity. She's gone in there to get her rations card, have some bills paid, they couldn't find the money! Couldn't, so she might be without electricity tonight or something. They do not bloody well know what they are doing. Little old pip squeak, Johnny Howard, come up. It was, I think, his last stand. Dump the blacks and I'll get in again, you know. And this is how it is with us, cos one of the Centrelink girls had the audacity to say to me when she came into my place: "We're trying this in the Northern Territory for 12 months if it works we're going to the other communities." I said "Oh yeah, try it on the poor old blacks first." And then she's: "Oh no no no no no, that's not it." I said: "Come on love. You know." And this is what's going on. It's stupid to think that someone is going to tell you, "here's fifty dollars to go to Kmart to get some clothes", you know. I'm exasperated I just don't know what else to say."

(on what to do now) "I know everyone's walking away, but yesterday looking around I thought, this is great. What we need to do now is like that lady said, a little bit of shock treatment. We have the numbers right here now. And

I think we should do something now, like that lady was saying. And it's not impossible. It's not. We just have to get on our feet, doesn't Parliament open today? Tomorrow, righto, we should be there. As a whole united race of people. And I can see a lot of people who are not... not my colour or even darker. But we thank you for your support, I tell you. I have had this support previously in my fight against uranium on my block of land. And the people who have come there, and it's a lot of them, and its been absolutely fabulous. On my block of land I've had to accomodate about 2000 people in one meeting and I thought, this was so great. And I hope they took away, as I suggested, a little bit of that red dirt that we sat on, because it is precious. But let... let us doing it now, like that lady says I don't know why we all can't go and, lunch break or not, get up there and talk to those people. We want action now, not tomorrow. And the Constitution taking 20 years to change, that's a whole lot of rot matey. If you've got the power and the strength behind you, you can do things, you know. So all I say to you lot that are here, Mauri Ryan, let's do it please. Okay that's all. And I'm not crying."



Dividing Communities.

Mitch is an Arrente and Luratji woman from Alice Springs. This is what she had to say about her experience of the intervention.

“My family are coming to me because I live in the suburbs. I’m under the welfare quarantine stuff. I’m not under the other stuff. I don’t have to put a card in at the moment, so every fortnight when I go to put my form in, I beg em to put me under because I’m feeding thirty extended family members on my pension with two kids.

So this intervention stuff has already divided us in our communities. I live in Alice Springs after coming in from bush because we had no high schools. We’ve heard this word sovereignty. I learnt about sovereignty in school. We’ve come here to gather that strength under that sovereignty word so we can take that back to our elders and discuss that.

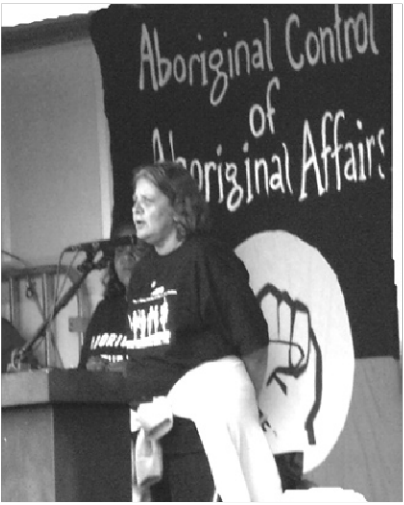
I signed a lease for my housing commission house but just six months after I had to sign another lease because of this intervention. I had to sign a stat. dec. to say whether my house was going to be an alcohol free zone. Any of my family know that my house is alcohol free as it is, and under

that I refused to sign it so I don’t get a sign screwed to my front door and screwed up to my front fence to say it was an alcohol free zone. I then had to sign a stat. dec. to say I didn’t want the alcohol free zone, stating on that stat. dec. that my house is alcohol free.

As it is, my son, who visits his family out on town camp, has to make sure he cleans his car before he goes and vists his family. He’s not allowed to have an empty beer can in there. He’s not allowed to have a tallyho paper sitting in his car cos they’ll assume he’s a drug runner.

So those things are putting wedges in place in town, and we actually own Alice Springs. One council owns that town, so the division between the communities and the townspeople is a really real thing.

But I wanna touch on the emotional abuse that’s happening to our people. Would it be acceptable for the army to go into any community here? I was standing in Parliament house when John Howard was announcing this stuff. Talking about the dump is sue. Now I’m not here for the dump issue I’m here for the intervention issue. I’m very clear on



that in my head. On Wednesday I’ll be here for the sorry business issue. So we’re not mild people. We’re not ignorant, but we’re gathering this information to take it home.

We stood up, we explained exactly what we’ve implemented in Alice Springs. Our own grog and rehabilitation centre. Our own children’s centre where they can go and play safely. All those things we’ve fought long and hard for. People have chucked their pension money in to keep these things going. We’ve had cake stalls. Now the government’s withdrawing all of that funding. So I don’t know how in all of this our children are suposed to be safe.

So I’m standing here in Parliament House, and I’m wondering what my two daughters are gonna do while I’m not there. How I’m supposed to accept them to be clinically raped when they get checked. Let’s get this straight. Them doctors came in, the army came in, they looked at our children out bush, then handed the report back to the N.T. health department, which is already over-stretched and underfunded and under resourced.

So let’s be really clear that there hasn’t been a house built for an Aboriginal person There hasn’t been a school, a kindergarten, or a high school built for Aboriginal people, and that’s all we’ve ever begged for, is the same standards as everybody else. That’s all we want: equalness. And a house and a school and a job to look forward to is basically our human rights. So we can take this information back about sovereignty.

We didn’t come here to get growled at. We didn’t come here to get yelled at. We came here to find out what that sovereignty word is. So we can go back to our people We’ve got the paperwork from other people that’s put their hand up for sovereignty in the courts. So we can take that back and add strength to the already strong communities that we’ve got.”

Invasion

“I don’t call it intervention, I call it invasion, me... When I first heard about it and I said to my family that way... We come from Yuendumu, which is about 300-350km NW of Alice, in the Tnamuni. You gotta go to this meeting... is what? Intervention meeting? I say nah, invasion. And everybody saying shhhh! Intervention! Nah, it’s invasion to us. We got invaded long time ago, now it’s coming up again!

And these old people coming up to me, cos I work at the women’s centre, help out, drive them around with shopping and wherever. To the camps with the shopping... This elder women - I work at the Elder Women’s Centre - she came up and I don’t know where all her money’s gone. Show me the card. One for \$10 Kmart, another one \$10 for... How do you expect that old woman to spend \$10? I got a shock. I just looked at her and held her. Saw people: I don’t know where the money’s gone? Cos quarantined, and I explained the word quarantine. It’s really bad!

And how... how are young kids gonna learn our language and dignity and all that cultural side cos it’s not going to be taught. Our language is not going to be taught in our communities. That’s what it’s really about. We want our kids to learn our language, what our cultural beliefs are...

We got kids laying down. I went into town, families coming across: “Ah police come and take... my baby was asleep on the... fast asleep, he just come and threw that... baby, the baby was lying on the bed and threw the blanket.” And I go, what?

That’s what they do. They are invading our homes and our lives, telling us what to do, telling us how to run our lives. We want to be living free. Our people used to live free and roam round the country. But what this government up here is doing, telling us what to do, how to go about our lives. It’s really bad! We know how to look after our kids, how to protect our kids. We, they know what’s wrong... We tell them on the television, don’t look at it, and they close their eyes. We tell them... teach our kids the right way, and they expect us tell them. We know how to look after our kids and protect our kids. Even the ceremony side’s gonna be demolished, taken away from us. They don’t know the land, the beliefs to us, they don’t believe that. That’s all I’m gonna say.”



Incognito

Dressed in a hat and sunnies, former ATSIC chairwoman Lowitja O’Donaghue attended Monday’s workshop at the tent embassy. This is what she had to say about the apology and the intervention.

“That was very emotional to hear the story from someone who is living the experience of the N.T. intervention, and he also wants to get into the public gallery for the stolen generation...So he is really suffering at the moment in terms of sorry and what that is going to mean for us. So we all need to remember that we’re here for sorry as well as for the intervention, and also to get the Central Australians and also N.T. people here, to tell them we are actually here for them, and we stand beside them all the way in relation to where we go after Wednesday. Because we’ve gotta move on after the sorry, and we’ve gotta make the politicians understand why we’re here, really, the issues as they relate to the intervention...

In the last two weeks I’ve been trying to get things in place for the sorry statement, because we’ve only had two weeks. And I still don’t have a piece of paper to tell me that I’m in there or what’s happening with it, because bu-reaucracies can’t do things in two weeks. And so we’re struggling in relation to that...

So I think that the Prime Minister is listening, or trying to. I’ve gotta have faith in that at the moment, that he is listening. And then we’ve gotta keep him to his word as we’ve moved on, because right up until the time I got here I wondered if I was really coming to protest, or if I was coming to celebrate, and I think we’ll probably do both. So let’s be here for stolen generation as well who are hoping for some heartfelt words, but then let’s keep them to it in relation to where we go after Wednesday.

And then the intervention, well, I really feel for ya sister, and see what we can do to change things there, because we know what the government’s position is at the moment. But you are going to have some meetings, private meetings. Really we’ve gotta get them to understand that the intervention is not working for our people...

I’m not sure that anyone has actually been talking about the paedophilia. We’ve had no reports back since the intervention as to whether that’s true. So we need to see on paper in relation to that, and also the children’s checks as well.”



crowd 12-2-08 photo: Jessie Boylan



Quarantining income

A lot of the speakers had some things to say about the quarantining of incomes and the impact that this has had on their communities. The speeches gathered here all took place on the Monday, and highlight problems with the income quarantine and Job Network restructuring. The speakers are all from Alice and are as follows: Vanessa Davis, talking on the impact of the quarantine; Aaron, talking about implementing the new income system; and Leslie, a Job Network worker who, in her position, has been dealing with the scrapping of the CDEPs alongside the new income program.

Vanessa Davis: “What I’m going to say is about the quarantine of our Centrelink payments. We get half quarantined and half of our Centrelink paid into our bank. Half of our people get \$70, less than \$100, about \$90 to spend on themselves. And they’ve got a card they’ve gotta go spend at Coles, Kmart or Woolworths. Those are the three options only we have with the card, which is not fair to us. We are ordinary people. We do our things. This is the card we are given. It’s like a key card, you gotta swipe and they give you a number and you gotta pin it. They give you as much as, as far as \$200 to spend. It’s like back in the day I grew up with my family working on the stations, getting rations. I seen them getting those rations days. And then when this was introduced, old people working on them stations say we are back in those days again.

We should be going forward. I know we’d like to be doing that but we can’t. The government’s taken us back and back. Leaving us behind. What are we gonna achieve with that, ya know? I know we’d like our kids to have an education and all that, we need better housings and that for our health. But we don’t want

the intervention to go in there and do that. We got speakers who can speak up, you know. We got other Aboriginal organisations too to help us do that. We got government people who don’t know what Central Australian people do down, live down there. They have no idea.

I questioned the Centrelink lady, she was from Melbourne. And I asked her: “Do you know what these people are like?” “Ah, I don’t have a clue.” “And why did you come here then?” “Ah it’s the government’s orders.” “I don’t wanna be served by you if you don’t know what my living conditions are.” So I just got up and walked away.

So what I want for is you people to help us stop this intervention, this quarantine. Supposed to be Little Children Are Sacred, not quarantining anybody’s money.”

Aaron: “The intervention hasn’t affected me like it has my fellow brothers and sisters. I deal more so with the administration side of things, on behalf of the people that are being intervened, quarantined. And it is... a ridiculous situation, where I’ve gotta talk to people who are dumber than shit, basically. I spent one day talking to this person about one individual, working out how we can do this. And the people that were helping her, the client, not the idiot I was talking to, they were trying to implement a situation where they could help her. Cos the money was getting quarantined. It didn’t work! So along comes this dumb shit suggesting the same thing and I’m trying to tell him, it didn’t work before, how’s it going to work now? And it still hasn’t. This was weeks ago. She’s wondering where her money is. I’m being asked by people that I know are being intervened: “where’s our money?” I’ve gotta say: “at your community store.” But these people lived at Alice Springs before this, what, end of June 2007 period. So I’ve got people up there who are having their



money quarantined because they are still on their communities. How’s that possible? They’ve been living in Alice Springs for over two or three years before that. And along comes this bloke- I’ll say his name Brian Stacey, idiot he is, and went to a meeting with him. He said a couple of things that got me riled, so I said, “how do you know these things? Has someone come from your areas to these communities to check?” He said, “probably not.” There’s no probably not about it. No one did! So basically I always thought this intervention thing was bullshit and racist. Doesn’t affect me, but I’m here to support my brothers and sisters in this fight.

I tell you, when it first started I saw the fear on the children’s and parents’ faces when the armies were going into the communities. I’ve never seen so many children in town that day. We had to calm them down. It’s like being stolen all over again. We all know what fear is, but this is more than being scared by some scary movie or someone saying boo to you. And everything calmed down and they didn’t start running away, but after hearing all these problems, it hasn’t, it’s not going to work, basically. It won’t work! And after hearing about the police coming into the communities. South Africa of the old may have died, but it moved to another continent: N.T. So we have basically, right, apartheid in the Northern Territory. Where the police can do what they like. They even allow tasers. I don’t know if anyones’ been tasered, I haven’t, but what I’ve seen in the movies. It’s not your bloody good experience. Like this young man said about this lady, what if she was tasered. She’s got a medical condition, they could have killed her. So yes these inter

vention. It’s not even worth toilet paper. I’m just glad the two people who invented it got kicked out of their seats.”

Leslie: “My name is Leslie and I actually work for an Indigenous job network. And June last year, 2007, the government actually slashed our town services which actually operate or help the Indigenous people with employment. And when they did that, they basically kicked us in the guts for the town services, and now I actually work out in remote areas. And what I am seeing out in the remote areas, it’s really really heartbreaking. Cos what I see is a lot of confusion with people out in the communities. But most of all, once they’ve cut out the CDEP, a lot of people are just sort of, you know, walking around in a daze. They don’t know what’s happening. The other thing that’s also happening is if these people don’t work, they get cut. 8 weeks of no money whatsoever. So these people on quarantine, their money get cut because they’ve been forced to do some sort of training or look for some bloody job out on these communities that’s barely got jackshit. And that’s unfair to me. So my heart really goes out to all the bloody people who live in these communities, and I wish that the bloody government would go out to these communities.

As for those communities’ brokers, pffttt, they’re nothing to me. As far as I’m concerned I’m going to talk to the people, you know. Aint going to talk to no government and tell me how their community should be run, when really it should be the community mob telling them, “Nah, sorry, we live here. We’ve been here for so long and we should. You shouldn’t be telling us what we should be doing, that’s our land, and that’s our area.”

You can’t replace the hurt

I came down for two reasons. My name is Mauri Japarta Ryan , I’m Gurinji. I’m 1600 kilometres from Alice Springs and I’m 950 from Darwin. So I’m in the middle. We’ve all come here. I come for two reasons. I said earlier about this intervention, which is one of the most racists Acts put on my people in the Northern Territory, it’s only in the Northern Territory, because they can do it. The Nothern Territory is not a state, it’s like Canberra. Guess where it might come next? This place, Canberra. Cos the other states can’t do it because they have sovereign powers.

The other issue is something that happened to me 57 years ago: stolen generation. I came this time to hear an apology from a Prime Minister who has a mandate from Australian people who voted to say sorry. That other moron, the miniature Prime Minister John Howard, he said I’ll give you a sincere apology and regret from myself. I walked out and never spoke to him again. And he’s got a bloke who worked with him called Rudd. I call him the Malboro man. He rides in

town with money and buys communities. Port Keats. Tiwi Island. The leases right, 100 year leases. Guess what? To the people who really understand, we’ve actually leased the country to you people for 220 years.

Australia’s in denial, this country’s been in denial, not telling the truth. This country’s stolen, right, it’s stolen. Stolen children, I am one of them. I don’t carry a log on my shoulder, I carry a chip. I want an apology. I want two apologies. One to the stolen generations, and one for all the atrocities inflicted on my people for over 220 years.

All those things. Evey one I read in the paper and text. I don’t get to the papers regulary, everyday, the plane only flys once a week into my community. People say I didn’t do it, my taxes are not going to pay for this. Guess what. People on the dole pay taxes. White society has to pay back 220 years.

This is a very rich country. Only a few people share in it. If you look at why the intervention was put in place

Howard had nothing else to go to the white Australian people in an election. He didn’t have a Tampa, he didn’t have a Wheat board, all he had to do was lean back and flog the blacks. And guess what. It failed. Because he couldn’t dupe you anymore, right. He was going to again, on lies based on this thing here.

It has hurt people in the Northern Territory. I live in a remote community. There’s 72 remote communities. All the town camps, they offer you money, they offer you all this. You can’t replace the hurt. Even on Wednesday you will not ease the hurt of a lot of people. It’s way overdue. This intervention is still hurting a lot of people.

As I was talking to my older brother here, Harry. It’s like a train coming through where you belong. You can’t derail this train because all the governments are in cahoots with each other. They’re in cahoots! And this doesn’t benefit Indigenous Territorians, it makes you prisoners in your own country.

And like, these people are talking about their monies. How’d you like it if I came to your house and quarantined all the public servants, everyone who makes a wage? Quarantined your wages. Go up to Parliament House on Wednesday and say, “All you politicians, here’s your ticket for \$150, \$50 a ticket. You go and do your shopping in Alice Springs.” How do you reckon they’d feel? And yet they can impose these laws on us.

This country has to forgive us. You people have to. We can’t forgive you. Well, I can’t. But what has to happen is we have to walk together, united. black, white. There’s no such thing as brindle. You are black, white or brown, or you’re a different color. You’re not brindle. But we are human beings. What you have to do tomorrow is go together, march together with these cards and say to this mob, take this intervention back, because we don’t want it.”



Voices from the Deserts

In total there are 73 remote communities in Northern Territory affected by the intervention. The following speeches are from members of the Yuendumu community, 270 kilometres NW of Alice Springs, right on the Tanami Desert, and South Nurrundera, a community 107 kilometres south of Alice. The speakers are Harry Nelson and Christopher from Yuendumu, and Eric Braden from South Nurrundera.

Christopher: “Intervention means too many details. We have a body, legs, arms, head. Intervention is meaning first of all, what government has introduced, child sex abuse. That our CDEP been cut off. Centrelink quarantining. I work with the Aboriginal organisation at home and my job is Australian Medicare. I get the information and in Yuendumu report. What I said was evidence. I don’t see any of those words. And what you have been hearing from the government for a couple of months is absolutely lies. I work and I know, it is true, about my people.

And talking about the land. This is our land Australia and Australia

has a meaning. Stories, songs, things, different languages, and we are still strong. There is legislation or whatever, but we will stand strong and fight for our rights. I am here to tell this government, we gotta tell them what they are doing is just not right. We know Australia. We know what it’s like and them, they don’t know Australia. I don’t know where they get story from. We know Australia because all these countries have an Aboriginal name. You know, hills, they got an Aboriginal name, our language name you know. Trees, the river, they got a name all around, Aboriginal name, and we come from this place. We know this country belongs to us and we will stand strong, we’ll fight together with words. It is important that sometimes we must stand together. No good telling us what to do, we gotta tell them what we want.

Harry Nelson: “I been coming up here, or down here, for 30 years, fighting for the rights of Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory and all over Australia. As a traditional Aboriginal, I have laws. As a man who has gone through your education system, I know a bit about your culture. I am sorry that I am not feeling too happy at this moment. I should feel happy and more relaxed when the Prime Minister says sorry to the Stolen Generation. My job down here is to approach every one of you who is interested in supporting us against this intervention. It’s a mongrel Act, which was loaded upon us with no warning whatsoever. Been talking to some of the

people living here in Canberra. I’m talking politicians and other red-necks. They have been planning this intervention for years.

You have no idea what effect it has done to our people up there in the Territory. Our dream of improving our lifestyle and standards has been shattered. Not completely, we are still fighting. That’s why I thank people like Eileen, Barbara Shaw, Vince, Mauri Ryan... And it’s good to see that. Good to hear that they are doing something for us. On behalf of all the battlers up there and other people down here, thank you, for us, speaking on behalf of us. The next few days I know we are all going to be waiting for the magic word: sorry. But our concern is intervention. I’m asking you my people, friends supports us. We don’t want intervention, second invasion.”

Eric Braden: “This is the first time I am sitting here talking to the people, and this is my first time in Canberra. I never did want to come to the city, but something in me told me to come over here and say what I wanted to say. People in my community were happy and working before this intervention came, collecting wood for the old people, taking out rubbish. Every morning they get up, 7 o’clock in the morning, and have a shower and go to work, even the young women. Ever since this intervention came we have only half of the young people working at the communities. And they have to go to town to get the unemployment, but it’s gonna be hard for them to get unemployment because of this

quarantining of money. They know this is gonna be cut off too. Half of the money goes to them, half of the money goes for the tucker.

Also people coming from the communities are having trouble going to the bank and getting the money. They have to have a special card called an I.D. card, I’ve got one here. You have to go to the bank just to get the money out, so if we haven’t had one, because in Australia you have to have one...

There was this old fella and his daughter standing in front of me at the bank, happy to get his money. He went up to the receptionist, he told his name and where he come from, and asked how much he got in the bank, and the bank told him, “you got this much”. Then the receptionist turned around and said “have you got an I.D. card”, and he said no, and the old fella, he said “what is an I.D. card?” All those old fellas in the centre, they don’t even know what an I.D. card is. Then the receptionist told him you have to go take your birth certificate, go to the office, but in those days, those fellas were just born in the bush. There was no hospital, there was no doctor, no nurse, and now they want a record of a birth certificate which they didn’t have. This old fella didn’t know what to do, what to say, just stood there for a few minutes, and then he walked out the door. And I just stood there, shook my head, and said, “why is this happening to our people, especially these old people?”



Smoking ceremony Tent Embassy 12-02-08 photo Jessie Boylan

Bucket of Crabs

“Most importantly, rather than us putting spotfires out all the time, why don’t we show solidarity, unity. Let’s all walk together. We gotta stand strong. If we all go in the same direction we can make things happen here. If you don’t believe that our people can do this ourselves, that we can’t be self determined, that we can’t work on ecological development ourselves then you wouldn’t be here...This campaign has gotta carry on. It’s just started. And people do believe it. Many of us have passionate beliefs that Aboriginal people are strong, proud, and they will get what they want. Before anything happens there are so many issues out in our communities. We have to deal with them. Everything from the self determination, the ecological development, the issues around sovereignty, all of those things. The stolen generations.

But we won’t be heard as much if we’re all going up there at different times. If we go up there as one, as one voice, all the different communities, all the countries, all the different states, representative of one group, instead of the bucket of crabs...You know every time one gets up to the top, the other one pulls them down. We gotta get rid of that. Gotta be a thing of the past for us. Cos they’re gonna get cunning. They’re gonna find new ways to get under us. And now is the time, this is the time for us, for our people. We’re all here. Strangely enough, the intervention, the sorry comes up, the convergence comes up. All in the same place at the same time. This is not by accident. We’re meant to be here. This has gotta happen and I put my total support behind you mob. I don’t care what anyone else says I’m standing with these fellas and I pledge to anyone here, stand with these fellas cos we need to stand as a people.”

Born from the Land

“We people come here from the North. We are black people. We been talking lots to the government, and nothing happened. We got to stop this. But nothing has happened. We been trying a lot, people been working with the government and doing a lot of things, but nothing. We own Australia, we are owners of this place. We got a culture in Australia. You know this. White people came to Australia, Captain Cook came here, everyone knows this, we gotta think about how we can get out of this problem. I know that sorry business was for sorry things, and I know that because white people are only two family. It’s not your family, it’s not my family, so we gotta think about this. We gotta come in with one voice. How are we gonna get out? How are we gonna stop this? We are national in Australia, black people right around Australia. We are a lot of people in Australia, we’ve got our own language and our own law, so how are we gonna get out? I been trying this for a long time and I know that people work for the government. And now you’re getting white. I’m getting white too...So we got young people here, we gotta learn them to stop all the things, to say we’re owners of this land, we’re born from the land, and we know that we got our own culture and our own law. We gotta speak like this. If we speak with one voice we can easily beat them.”



the crowd, parliament lawns tuesday 12th february, belinda faulkner

Katherine

“In Katherine during Christmas time, people travelled all over 300 kilometres to go and get their store cards from Katherine Centrelink, their ration cards. In the end, there was 500 people there, and they ran out of store cards. So people with kids, old people, they went without. They went without whole Christmas, without anything because of Centrelink, because Centrelink ran out of ration cards. And Centrelink had to close down and there were still people hanging around Katherine for the whole Christmas long weekend, because they couldn’t afford to get back.”



Human Rights, for all!

Over 2000 people gathered outside the Tent Embassy on the morning of Tuesday 12th February for a march to the lawns outside Parliament House. Beginning with a traditional smoking ceremony and speech from Auntie Isabelle Coe, the crowd then headed to Parliament, flags furling, smoke blowing shouting “Stop the Intervention! Human Rights for all!” as they went. Outside Parliament, there were speeches from Bob Brown, Greg Eatock, the ACTU, and most importantly, the N.T. mob. The next two pages are a collection of those speeches and photos.

Babara Shaw: “Everybody’s always talking about Reconciliation. A lot of the whitefellas down South and over on the Eastern seaboard done a lot of work for us. A lot of men and women did work for us, and my heart goes out to those people. All my organisers from around the country. We raised \$40 000 to get here, and whatever’s left over is going to go to the next rally or march, wherever we have it. It’s like Auntie Isobel is saying, come back here or go elsewhere.

Jenny Macklin said that she wasn’t able to go to over 73 communities but she’d go to one place, and we want her to come to Alice Springs because that’s where the intervention started.

Now a lot of these people up here on stage, they come from different areas, different communities, different language groups, but we’ve all got the same problem. It’s not working for us and we want it stopped.... We all want change for our communities and lifestyles, but us Aboriginal people, we live by two laws. We live by Aboriginal law and white man law. If we want reconciliation on our towns and communities, we’ve gotta start here and you can see here, and down there that there’s a lot of people willing do that... Once this intervention has stopped, we’ve gotta talk about the real issues: housing, education and employment. I’m a fourth generation town camper, these mob here the fifth. The old people they’ve lived through this before, and don’t want us to.”

Harry Nelson: “Hello everybody, good to see you. I am very, very pleased to see so many people taking part in this march and rally. I can not say anything further because my heart has been taken away with the pride you mob have shown by supporting us. I hope that this next mob who make the trip down to Canberra will have more people participating, younger mob from out bush. But we have

a headquarters in Alice Springs where we congregate and talk about how this is going in Alice Springs and other communities. I thank you once more.”

Kim (ACTU): “The trade union movement and the Aboriginal movement had a very common enemy last year, and we knocked him off. And we can still keep moving forward on the issues that are important to us. You’ve got the Northern Territory legislation that also needs to be knocked off. It’s shameful, it’s wrong, it’s returning to the 1950s, it’s returning to the era of stolen children, we all know that. That legislation needs to be wiped out, but its gonna take vigilance and monitoring and action like this to keep them on their toes up there, we know that...We’ve got a lot in common. The trade unions donated a lot of money to bring people here from the communities today...Unions and Aboriginal people have been fighting alongside each other for a very long time, we’re used to fighting together, we’re often fighting the same enemy, so we understand that we stand strong together with you today.



Harry Jakamarra Nelson addressing the gathering, Parliament House lawns, 12 February 2008

This is the first step, and we have a saying in our movement. Dare to struggle, dare to win. We did it last year, we’ll keep doing it this year, we’ll keep doing it the following year, until we knock off bad law.”

Greg Eatock, aboriginal rights coalition Sydney: “First of all I wanna acknowledge the Ngunawal people whose land we stand on today, and secondly I want to thank Barbara Shaw and the elders and the aunties who have come from all around the country, especially the top end in the N.T., cos what those people are facing up there is an apartheid state that is a legacy of racist laws of the Howard government. And we say shame. And the international community needs to know that land rights in the N.T. are under attack, people are suffering. Barb and her people will soon be getting up to share their stories directly. But I will say that we must end this racist legacy of the Howard government, and we must end it immediately. People are dying

from it. It’s an apartheid system. We all know what apartheid is, and that’s what people are living under in the N.T. This is just the beginning of the campaign, and we will be organising on the 13th of each month around the country. What we’ve gotta do is get people mobilised again, we’ve gotta stand up and be counted. This is happening because of a lack of respect and recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty in this country

Walter Shaw: “I wanna thank you all. My name is Walter Shaw and I’m a fourth generation town camper. This is the third time I’ve been here. The first time was when the announcement was made by the Indigenous Affairs Minister, back then Mal Brough, and the late and great Prime Minister of that time, John Howard. I then came down the next time, and that was in September when the bill was being passed through Parliament and all those Parliamentarians only had one night to oversee 500 pages. We sat down with half a dozen Senate committees during the day. A lot of those people who passed the bill that is now called the intervention did not know the

impact or the effect it will have on us mob in the prescribed areas, communities and also the town camps. But we’re here, months later, feeling the impact, and I’m glad to see that we have friends in our own backyard!

Now they did suspend the *Racial Discrimination Act* of 1975. This intervention is racially vilifying our people, men and women, saying women neglect their children, men abuse them, men and women are chronic alcoholics. We wanna move forward. This is not the right way of doing business. We came here to do business. I lot of people are asking me why I’m wearing black, I feel like Johnny Cash up here. This intervention feels like the last nail in our coffin for us in the Northern Territory. We want to maintain our cultural existence and our existence as people. But we wanna move forward so we can live side by side with all Australians. Thank you.”

Vincent Forrester: “Hey you mob, how you doing? My names Vin-

cent and I belong to Mutitjulu area where they started picking on us. I’m looking for a fight. You know why I’m looking for a fight? I was sitting on country, peaceful, and I seen a General and some boofhead with some strange policies, Mal Brough.

Now him, Mal Brough, little Johnny, and HR Nichols society, take their policy with them and go and jump in the longest, deepest long drop they can find. They came up there, and it’s still in existence, they compulsorily acquired our lands, they compulsorily acquired our businesses. They then closed our schools, to which they didn’t put much in, and we built ourselves, and they have extinguished our human rights up there, suspended democracy in the Northern Territory, not taking into consideration the international obligation.

I see a lot of you people around here come from many lands. Thank you for supporting us, the original people of this land, who now come in peace. We’re looking for a good go from this government because the neglect we’ve had from prior and previous governments since 1967 it is still with us today. I am a tax payer! I pay my tax! But there is no equal distribution between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people at this time.

When we go forward as a nation I hope Mr Rudd can lead us on a form of Reconciliation. This is gonna take a while. I’m moving down to the city and I’m gonna talk to you Reconciliation mob. We’re gonna have a bit of a yarn, hey? As we go towards and looking at Reconciliation, healing the wounds of the past. And he’s doing a good job by saying sorry tomorrow. I put my heart out to all you stolen generation mob, I love you, my brothers and sisters. But please do not let this sorry be hollow. I beg you, please, Prime Minister, you and your Government. If you don’t use this word ‘sorrys in both Houses of Parliament with the support of the now opposition, you’ve got shit for brains. We go forth in Reconciliation as a nation. We’re furthering ourselves in the sporting fields and education areas now. We deserve human rights, we are human beings too. When we further Reconciliation, as we reconcile information, there must be a legal document entrenched in Parliament too. Thank you.”

“I come here with all my countrymen to stop this intervention. Thank you. You know what, I call it invasion, hey? I don’t like this idea. They gave us cards to do the shopping, why can’t they give us taxi vouchers? They give cards but we got no way of doing our shopping. Funny that. We got the cards, and make long way into the city, how do you expect us to go all the way and then back with all the shopping?”





continued from previous page.

Mauri Ryan: “I’m sitting here in two sides. One of them stolen generation, I feel it. I lost my language. But I’m here with my countrymen. I live 1600km north of Alice and I’m also 950km south of Darwin. I come from the Gurinji nation. My grandfather is Vincent Lingiari . This legislation is one of the most racist legislations by the Howard Government, imposed on my people in the Northern Territory. There has been a few racist interventions: 1770, when some idiot put a rag in the ground. Then you have the Racial Discrimination Act, and the rest. This was only done in the Northern Territory. You mob here be careful, they could do it because we’re not a state. And it’s imposed on our people only, Aborigines living in town camps and communities, 72 of them. The permit, this little \$50 card, why don’t we go and give our politicians these cards. Tell em to go shop at Alice Springs. Amongst us here today there are descendants of the 390 nations that owned this country for 60 000 years. This country is based on lies! By the bread thieves who call themselves government. Mr Brown was the best speech I’ve ever heard, and I’m not in any political party. I believe in myself. I believe in these people here. But thank you for coming here and supporting us. And do it again tomorrow when we hear the sorry.”

“My name is Aaron. I’m from Alice Springs. I don’t speak my language. I’m the first Generation that can’t. But I will be the last generation because these children here, they are growing up with their language. Now the intervention, which hasn’t affected me, I deal with the administration side of it, not part of it. I have to explain to my people where their money is and what they’ve gotta do. I’ve asked one of these gentlemen here, this card is what they need for money, because he has no form of I.D. Yes, this is a dog tag. This generation, they experience it. This they should not. We’ve got no heroes, this can’t go on. I have dealt with a lady who’s been wondering where the money is, other people have tried to help her. People who the previous government put in to work this things out, the benefactors, don’t know jackshit. We’ve had to fight... to get money for these people. We shouldn’t have to beg, borrow... or steal. We are not children getting pocket money. We are not animals being told what to do. We are a people, a proud people, the first people. And we need to tell the Parliament here today where to stick the intervention policy.

Walter Shaw: “We are privileged enough to have a Maori MP here: Hone

Harawira. This intervention was an ideological vision from Mal Brough. He’s no longer got a seat. This should have been thrown out with him.”

Hone Harawira: “Hello everybody. Last year I got myself in trouble by my Parliament and your Parliament by calling John Howard a racist bastard. I got fined by my Parliament by breaking out of a Parliamentary visit to Melbourne and shooting up to Alice Springs to support the families up there. And I’m gonna get in trouble when I get back home because today’s the opening of our Parliament as well. But my heart is here. My heart is with Indigenous struggles around the world. So just a few short remarks:

Is John Howard a racist bastard?
YES!!!

Are we glad the bastard’s gone?
YES!!!

Do we support Aboriginal rights?
YES!!!!
YEEHAH!”



Darren Bloomfield and brother reunited, Tuesday 12th February photo Belinda Faulkner

“My white name is Steve. I don’t live on a prescribed area but I do live in Mparntwe, Alice Springs... I’ve lived in Mparntwe for 21 years. So I’m pretty much an invader, an interloper. I’m virtually white compared to local mob. It’s not my country. It’s my home, not my homeland, but I’ve got the decency to respect local mobs when I can. I know Alice Springs is not that area’s first name. I know that Todd River, where countrymen get kicked out everyday, is called Lhere Mparntwe. Some people talk about Aboriginal people learning to respect themselves, but I ask those people, when are you going to learn to respect Aboriginal people? When you going to learn to say Werte, hello? This is invasion, not intervention. It’s our fault again, not the governments fault. Some people even said intervention is a good thing. Well, let’s do the maths then:

For starters, how can it be racist if it only picks on blacks?
Can’t be racist, they suspended the Racial Discrimination Act.
Continued to attack the most disadvantaged people in this place.
Make them hasten the pace to join the rat race, while we continue to flame the ingrained prejudice that makes

this nation an international disgrace. Forced us to reform by quarantining welfare, well I don’t think that’s fair. They take income from one group in the community, which everyone in this country gets as a basic right, they put their own money on a gift card and make them queue up to get their own money back as a gift. Now in Alice, them mob are given free reign to inflict more pain, and stand over us mob without disdain. Backed up by Utopian blacks who plea for us to stand back, retract and change our tact, well I say they broke the pact on what it means to be black. Even if us mob wanna reform, it’s still us mob who’ve gotta weather the storm the previous government created. Instead of consulting and informing, they imposed these drastic measures on the most uneducated people here, after spending millions this past year. What’s a family have on the ground, where are they to be found? How many services does countrymen get their hands on and the land tenure basic services held to ransom by a government that doesn’t exist anymore?

This mob who just started up here were backed up the Central and Top End blacks. With their political will we overwhelmingly chose to resist, convincingly chose to insist that the invasion be at least reformed. So this mob up here they saying they are starting to listen but don’t close your ears if you wanna hear. Re enact the Racial Discrimination Act. For the benefit of the nation, sign the Un Indigenous person declaration. Oh yeah, p.s., don’t forget to repeal the Emergency Response legislation.”

“My name is Mitch. I’m an Arrente woman on my grandfather’s side and Luratji woman on my grandmother’s side. I’d like to remind you that we are sitting in the A.C.T. the only place in Australia that has the most liberal pornographic laws. So these people can watch whatever they like, and yet they can’t narrow it down to what pornographic law means to Aboriginal people. We’ve got the word.

What can you do? There’s lots you can do. On the 13th of every month we’re gonna picket the Centrelink offices. For those people who can’t attend a Centrelink office to stand outside, we ask that you jam up their telephone service and their internet service. We also ask that you go into your local Centrelink office if you’ve had a child molested in any century in Australia in your community, and put your hand up for the intervention. Ask them why it’s only black babies that

are gonna be saved in Australia. Why aren’t all children gonna be saved in Australia?

I’d also like to remind you that while they’re chopping us mob down at the knees in the Territory, you mob have got the terror laws, you’ve got the worker’s rights stuff that went down. So as much as they’re chopping us down, they want say they are doing it for white people’s good. Just remember, we’ve gotta stand strong together, we’re gonna get old together, and we need this younger generation strong, knowledgable, and with equal education and health. We’re standing on traditional lands, and there’s an empty elephant right in front of me [Old Parliament House]. Why isn’t that opened up to the homeless, to the people who are sick, to the people who need a roof over their head? We won’t, we’ll turn it into a museum, and one day in my lifetime I hope we’ll have an Aboriginal museum in every capital city in Australia. I also ask, when you leave here today, get onto your politicians, get onto your members of Parliament and let them know exactly how you feel and how you want Australia to go ahead.”

Brothers United.

Uncle Arthur:
“I want you to hear something. This is still happening in our country, our people are still meeting each other. So you want a dose of reality, here’s a dose of reality. Darren! Darren Bloomfield! You come up here (applause as Darren meets his brother for the first time).”

Darren
“It’s been a hell of a journey for myself personally. I was 67 born, my brother before me. ... Yeah and um, I’ve been waiting 40 years to get back to me grass roots sorta thing, and today, I just feel like crying really. The feeling is unbelievable ...I’ve found a lot of things, I found my heart, and now here I found my family...”

Brother
“Been a long time for me, 42 years. I’m just overwhelmed at the moment, first time I met my brother after 42 years.

This is a family reunion to remember. Let this day be special and remembered. Let’s say, that day, this is something good for Aboriginal people, we stood together with other Australians and we got back together as a family, cos family is everything.”

In the Long Grass

Despite the press reporting that the intervention is being welcomed in the N.T., many communities and activists disagree. Noting increasing influxes of people moving from the communities to the major towns to try to survive the new intervention measures, activists are wondering whether there is a more sinister underlying motive of this intervention to render remote Aboriginal communities unsustainable.

‘Politicians like Alison Anderson say people are welcoming the intervention. So why are so many now in town, homeless and jobless?’ asks Barbara Shaw of Mt Nancy Town Camp in Alice Springs.

In Bagot Town Camp in Darwin, the population has increased from an average of 500 before the intervention to 1200, resulting in mass overcrowding and significantly increased homelessness on Darwin’s fringes. One home currently houses nine separate families. Of the 57 houses that make up Bagot Town Camp, three are to be demolished, only one in five have

either a stove or a refrigerator, and of those with stoves, many have only one working element. With the intervention forcing people into the towns, as ration cards can only be spent at the large supermarkets in the major centres, the newly homeless are creating an additional burden on the already overstretched services in the Camp.

As elsewhere in the Territory, the only previously viable community enterprise, the community store, is excluded from the welfare quarantine system, which applies only to Woolworths, Coles and Kmart in the major population centres. Obviously, without customers, the community stores are facing a rapid extinction. In Tennant Creek alone small shop owners are reporting a 70-80% drop in business since the introduction of income quarantining in mid April.

This picture is repeated in Alice Springs, Katherine, and other towns in the Territory.

“Alice Springs now is full of many peo-

ple who, because of “welfare quarantines” cannot afford to get back to the bush,” said Greg Eatock of the Aboriginal Rights Coalition.

Yet rather than addressing problems of overcrowding and homelessness, police are targeting Aboriginal people for occupying public spaces and for alcohol usage, banned for Aboriginal people only. On the 4th and 5th of April in Alice Springs, 188 Aboriginal youths were taken into custody as part of a police “special operation” ‘on public drunkenness and loitering’, because, police say, ‘they might get up to no good.’

To Eatock, the motivations are clearly racist. ‘How many non-Aboriginal youths were taken into custody in Alice Springs this weekend for loitering?’ he asked.

To him and others, like Barbara Shaw, loitering is a clear symptom of increased homeless people in the towns. She says that ‘large numbers of young people are getting stuck here now, and caught up in substance abuse.’ Even more worrying are rising levels of petrol sniffing and suicide. ‘Police have all these new powers to punish people

– where are the resources for rehabilitation? Arresting people will only set their lives back even further.’

These uses of the new laws and powers to punish Aboriginal people doesn’t seem to have anything to do with child abuse, child neglect, or Aboriginal welfare in the slightest. As Eatock says, ‘This is clearly Apartheid. How are people supposed to pay their fines when half their incomes are now on ration cards?’

‘This legislation and government action is a form of terrorism used specifically against our people. They are entrenching racism with these actions,’ says Vince Forrester, a Mutitjulu elder who has travelled to Sydney as an ambassador from Uluru and Kuta-tjuta to speak out about the Northern Territory intervention.

Bagot elder Lyle Cooper, who runs the food and nutrition program at the Bagot health clinic, says, ‘I thank you Prime Minister Rudd for your apology...(but) it’s an invasion all over again. We are being told where to shop, what to eat, how to act and how to live.’



rally heading to parliament Feb 12th 2008 photo: Claire Nemorin

We own Australia, we are owners of this place. We got a culture in Australia. You know this. White people came to Australia, Captain Cook came here, everyone knows this. We gotta think about how we can get out of this problem.... we gotta come in with one voice.... We are national in Australia, black people right around Australia. We are a lot of people in Australia, we've got our own language and our own law... We got young people here, we gotta learn them to stop all the things, to say we're owners of this land, we're born from the land, and we know that we got our own culture and our own law. We gotta speak like this. If we speak with one voice we can easily beat them.

Tent Embassy Feb 11th 2008

We are not yet a whole country because we have not yet recognised the first Australians who occupied this great land of ours, who were part of, who are part of, who will always be part of, the soil, the living fabric, the wildness, the tameness of this magnificent Australia.... We must move on to a recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty, of country... So we can join you and be whole Australians, cos we recognise that this whole country comes from first Australians, is from first Australians, and we are all custodians...

Bob Brown, Parliament Lawns Feb 12th 2008

Always was and always will be, Aboriginal land. The Greens, as you know opposed the intervention since day one. We said it had to go, and we know it has to go, and we'll continue to fight to oppose it. This is racist legislation; otherwise they wouldn't have had to exempt it from the Racial Discrimination Act. This is taking people's land away, taking their income away, taking the permit system away, to try to "fix" problems that are evident in the N.T. because of a lack of resources provided by successive governments. The N.T. intervention is the Howard way of doing business, and what we're seeing at the moment is the Rudd government continuing the Howard agenda. Well we say no...

Rachel Stewart, Greens Senator WA Parliament Lawns Feb 12th 2008



crowd outside parliament Feb 12th 2008 photo Belinda Faulkner

What can you do?

- Write to politicians, or visit their offices, and tell them to repeal the intervention legislation, and to instead consult with communities to find out what they need to deal with the problems they face.:

Jenny Macklin, Indigenous Affairs minister
Postal Address:
PO Box 316
Heidelberg Vic 3084
email: JMacklin.MP@aph.gov.au
Tel: (03) 9459 1411
Fax: (03) 9457 5721

Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister
Postal Address:
PO Box 476A
Morningside Qld 4170
Tel: (07) 3899 4031
Fax: (07) 3899 5755

- Write Letters to the Editor to newspapers in your city, telling people about the intervention.
- Participate in or organise an action or protest against the N.T. intervention on the 13th of each month and on the National Day of Action on 21st June.
- Hand out flyers at Woolworths, Coles, or Kmart, to let customers know that these companies support the racist intervention.
- Spread the word about what the intervention really is doing to Aboriginal communities - make flyers, posters, badges, patches...
- Send messages of support, photos of protests, resources, to the N.T. communities
- Find out if there is a collective organising against the intervention in your area. Get involved, or if there isn't, start one!
- Further resources: www.aboriginalrightcoalition.wordpress.com
www.nationalaboriginalalliance.org
www.womenforwik.org
www.federalintervention.info

www.nit.com.au
www.studentsforsovereignty.blogspot.com
www.pariahnt.org
www.caama.com.au

