

Media Release 15<sup>th</sup> September 2007

## **Darwin Rally Hears Federal Government has “Betrayed its Own People”**

Over 500 people rallied in central Darwin this morning to support the rights of Indigenous Territorians and oppose the Federal Government’s intervention into Northern Territory Indigenous communities.

Speakers including Olga Havnen from the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory, Maratja Dhamarrandji an elder from Galiwinku on Elcho Island, local elder Kathy Mills, NT Indigenous MLA Matthew Bonson, Greens candidate for the federal seat of Solomon Debbie Hudson, and barrister Pat McIntyre spoke about the damage already being done in communities by the hastily conceived legislation which ignores the advice of experts.

They pointed out the discrepancy between the rationale for the intervention given by the federal government, and the disempowerment and dispossession of Aboriginal people, the seizure of Aboriginal land and abolition of CDEP. The \$88 million being spent on additional public servants to quarantine welfare payments was contrasted to the lack of ongoing funding for primary healthcare in communities.

Although the mood of the rally was at times somber - some participants had painted their foreheads with white clay as a sign of mourning, and many wore funereal black – there was a strong feeling of solidarity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous and a resolve to continue the action until, as local songstress Ali Mills put it *“the ripple that has started today becomes a tsunami”*.

The crowd joined Ali in singing a specially adapted version of the protest song ‘Blowing in the Wind’:

*How is it one nation always insists  
You just have to do what we say  
Can one man be king of an empty land  
His spirit destroying all life  
The answer my friend is blowing in the wind  
The answer is blowing in the wind.*

97 volunteers from the crowd, including adults and children, lined up with posters of the 97 recommendations of ‘The Little Children are Sacred Report’, and the rally passed a resolution in support of the report. The resolution passed by acclamation reads:

That this rally:

1. Expresses regret that the federal Government has failed to support the recommendations of the Little Children are Sacred Report;

2. Supports the profound commitment of Aboriginal Territorians to strong families, strong communities and to protecting their children from harm;
3. Acknowledges that child sexual abuse is a national issue;
4. Expresses support for the newly-formed National Aboriginal Alliance and for Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Northern Territory in their opposition to the discriminatory and coercive elements of the federal Government's 'emergency intervention' in the NT.

They also agreed to continue their action with a 'Walk for Strong Communities' to be held on Thursday 27 September at 5pm, gathering in Raintree Park, Darwin city and walking to the sunset at the Mindil Beach Markets.

Barrister Pat McIntyre summed up the frustrations of those at the rally with these words:

*Australians should be ashamed of August 2007. That is when our Federal Parliament created its own national emergency by betraying its own people and its own legal and political heritage. It consciously re-embraced legislative racism. In less than a month our fellow citizens have lost their homes, their towns and their businesses. They have lost their right to free and private assembly. They have lost their right to appeal the decisions of public servants. They have been collectively defamed and condemned as evil, corrupt, ignorant savages! Enough of this nonsense!*

Ends

More information is available from:

[www.federalintervention.info](http://www.federalintervention.info)

Donna Jackson (Larrakia woman): 0427 847 186

Rob Wesley Smith (Intervention Reform Coalition): 8983 2113 or  
rwesley@ozemail.com.au

David Cooper (ANTaR): 0418 486310

Ali Mills (songwriter and Larrakia woman): 0429 106 906

Images attached:

Volunteers hold up the 97 recommendations of 'The Little children are Sacred Report' for the crowd at a rally in Darwin today organised by the Intervention Reform Coalition. (If you require a high resolution version of the images attached please contact Amy Brand on 0415 282 189)

A full list of speakers is available over page.

**Full list of speakers:**

Donna Jackson, Larrakia woman (Welcome to Country)

Olga Havnen, Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the NT and Women for Wik

Kathy Mills, local elder

Maratja Dhamarrandji, Elder from Galiwin'ku Community, Elcho Island NT

Pat McIntyre, Barrister

Terri Lisson, Acting Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

Ali Mills, Larrakia singer/songwriter

Tania Davies, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory

Debbie Hudson, Greens candidate for the federal seat of Solomon

Matthew Bonson, NT Indigenous MLA

Mawayul Yanthalawuy, Storyteller and actor from Elcho Island

Ian O'Riley, NT Reconciliation Council