

The Hon Jenny Macklin MP  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA. 2600

November 17, 2008

Dear Ms Macklin,

I write on behalf of the Aboriginal Justice Support Group of AWD, an ecumenical organisation that, for 30 years, has been devoted to seeking justice for Indigenous Australians. Our members have read with interest the comprehensive report released by the Federal Government's Panel reviewing the Northern Territory Intervention.

It was an important initiative of the Federal Government to establish the Review of the Intervention and it is pleasing to see that you have travelled and consulted widely yourself in the Northern Territory.

As the Review report suggests the most essential element in moving forward is for the Federal Government to re-engage with the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. It suggests that the relationship must be re-calibrated to the principle of racial equality and respect for the human rights of all Australian citizens.

The review continued to say that sustained and sustainable improvements in the safety and wellbeing of children and families in remote communities will only be achieved through partnerships between community and government. Durable partnerships are based on mutual respect.

The lack of consultation with the affected Aboriginal communities, before the Intervention occurred, has created many problems for the Government's endeavour to establish the appropriate services needed in the crisis. It appears that the widely differing situations, infrastructure and resources of remote communities were not considered in the 'one size fits all' roll-out.

A major concern for our members is your continuation with the compulsory approach in regard to the quarantining of welfare payments. We feel that it is urgent that individual family situations are examined and that the quarantining provisions are applied only where they have been voluntarily requested and it is necessary and appropriate.

The relaxation of permits for access to remote communities is contrary to the recommendation of the Review Panel. The permit system should be re-instated as soon as possible and policed effectively.

We await your response to these concerns.  
Yours sincerely,

Anne and Bill Byrne (for the AWD Aboriginal Justice Support Group).