Statement of Eminent Australians on the continuing damage caused by the discrimination, racism and lack of justice towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, exemplified by the continuation of the Northern Territory Intervention

While the Australian nation deliberates on the future of its relationship with the First Nations of this land, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are focussed on the continuing discrimination, racism and lack of justice, shown towards them by Federal, State and Territory Governments in so many areas.

An obvious example is the failure of ten years of Federal Government INTERVENTION in the Northern Territory where 73 remote Aboriginal communities (and hundreds more in homelands in hinterlands) remain subjected to discriminatory legislation that no other Australian citizen endures in its crushing totality.

The signatories to this statement support the recent demands by Northern Territory Elders for an immediate repeal of the Intervention measures, some of which were strengthened and extended for ten years in 2012, by the misleadingly renamed ‘Stronger Futures’ legislation.

We support the calls by Elders in their June 29th 2017 statement for an end to government control of community living areas and the return of community control of housing, employment and local governance.

We also support their insistence on an apology and their right to determine their futures and distinctive pathways. First Nations’ voices have been increasingly ignored since the abolition of ATSIC in 2004 and the Intervention in 2007 and conditions have deteriorated.

It is time that Federal and Territory politicians acknowledged the independent assessments that the Intervention measures continue to fail and the necessity of establishing genuine self-determination and community control. All Australian citizens, black and white, are entitled to the adequate provision of services on an equitable needs basis; Indigenous people living at remote communities and on homelands have been neglected for far too long.

Aboriginal leaders are calling on governments to work with them on genuine partnerships that will see productive remote employment programs without the threat of punishment and loss of income and impoverishment; or attempts through social engineering to force people to move to larger towns and abandon their ancestral lands. The undue pressure placed on elders and communities by governments forced leases over their lands in exchange for basic services and housing must cease.

The unfair discrimination of compulsory income management and now CDP have been costly failures. It is time to return dignity and human rights to Indigenous peoples living in remote Australia.

The damage to Aboriginal families and whole communities from ten years of draconian control measures has accelerated child removal, suicide and the Indigenous incarceration rate. This can only be reduced through self-determination, community healing programs based on sound local cultural practices and an end to government legislated discrimination and intrusion into the lives of families.

2 http://www.monash.edu/law/research/centres/castancentre/our-research-areas/indigenous-research/the-northern-territory-intervention/the-northern-territory-intervention-an-evaluation
Great damage has been done.\textsuperscript{6} We need to be serious about respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voices. We need to heed their calls for equality, including regional agreement making, sovereign treaties and the proper recognition of their long-denied rights.

We call on the Australian government to heed the call of Northern Territory Elders for an immediate end to the racism and discrimination of the Intervention policies which are an ongoing stain on the Australian nation. It is time that Australian governments respect and negotiate with remote living Indigenous people in good faith, demonstrate proper duty of care to them and allow all First Nations of Australia the right to self-determination.

**Signatories,**

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The Rev Dr Peter Adam, OAM, Vicar Emeritus of St Jude’s Carlton.

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Uncle Bob Anderson, Ngugi Elder, Quandamooka, SE Qld.

Dr Robert V Anderson OAM, DUniv.

Dr. Thalia Anthony OAM, Associate Professor in Law, University of Technology Sydney.

Brigid Arthur csb, co-founder of the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP).

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Wendy Bacon, Journalist and Researcher, Board Member Pacific Media Centre. Contributing Editor New Matilda. Former Director and Professor of Journalism Program, University of Technology Sydney.

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Dr Jennifer Balint, Senior Lecturer in Socio-Legal Studies in Criminology, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne. Minutes of Evidence Project.

Virginia Balmain, Past President, United Nations Assoc Qld 2004-2013, Hon Life Member. Public Relations Manager, Australian Red Cross 5th Australia. Past, State Manager, Austcare Qld, Qld & NT Development Manager Outward Bound. Hon C’Wealth Secretary, Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, Australia.

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The Hon. Sally Brown AM, first female Magistrate and Chief Magistrate in Victoria, former Justice of the Family Court of Australia, and former Chair of the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Rev Dr Chris Budden, National Coordinator, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (Uniting Church).


Samuel Bush-Blanasi, Chairman, Northern Land Council.

John Butler, Singer, songwriter and music producer.

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Chris Cunneen FASSA, Professor of criminology, University of New South Wales.

Li Cunxin, Author of Mao’s Last Dancer, former Principal Dancer with the Australian Ballet and now Artistic Director Queensland Ballet.

Damien Curtis, Co-Director of the film, Our Generation.

Emelda Davis, President Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson) / Masters of Arts (Research) candidate UTS-FASS: ARC Scholarship recipient.

David Donovan, Editor Independent Australia.

Rolf de Heer, Film-maker.

Alec Doomadgee, Actor, Broadcaster, Film-maker.

Blak Douglas, Koori visual artist.

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Mark Edwards OMI, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne.

Grace Ellul, Congregational Leader of Marist Sisters.

The Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC, Australian reformist lawyer, former and first Chief Justice Family Court of Australia, first female judge of an Australian Federal Court, and first Australian to be elected to the UN Human Rights Committee.

Dr John Falzon, Chief Executive Officer of the St Vincent Paul Society National Council of Australia.

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Rodney Hall AM, Multiple award winning author.

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Shane Howard AM, Writer and Musician.


Peter Hudson, Artist.

Harold Hunt OAM, Elder, Author and Aboriginal community counsellor.
Bishop D Eugene Hurley DD, Bishop of Darwin, Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Graeme Innes AM, former Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner.

Hon. Dr. Barry Jones AC, FAA, FAHA, FTSE, FASSA, writer, former Federal ALP Science Minister and National President.

Professor Nicholas Jose, Author and Academic.

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Michael McLeod, CEO Message Stick Group.

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Pastor Ray Minniecon, Director of Bunji Consultancies.

Reg Mombassa, Artist and Musician.

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Shellie Morris, Singer/Songwriter, Ambassador Fred Hollows Foundation, NT Australian of the Year and NAIDOC Artist of the Year 2014.

Trisha Morton-Thomas, Filmmaker.


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Graeme Mundine, Bundjalung Catholic thinker.

Neil Murray, Musician, poet & author.

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Michael O’Loughlin, AFL Hall of Fame and Sydney Swans Legend.

Stephen Page AO, Artistic Director of Bangarra Dance Theatre.

Dr Francesca Panzironi, CEO, Anangu Ngangkari Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation.

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Dr Susan Pollard PhD, Jungian analyst, clinical psychologist, psychotherapist.


Clinton Pryor, ‘Spirit Walker’, Wajuk, Balardung, Kija and Yulparitja man from Western Australia. Just days away from completing the Walk For Justice from Perth to Canberra.

Nellie Muldhar Rankine, Ngarrindjeri Artist and Author.

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Molly Reynolds, Film director and actor.

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Dr Juliet Rogers, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, School of Political Sciences, Melbourne University, Adjunct Professor at Griffith Law School, Qld. Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow.

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Sinem Sabam, Co-Director of the film, Our Generation.

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John Schumann, Singer, songwriter, musician, social justice campaigner. Leader of bands Redgum and Vagabond Crew.

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Rev Ian Smith, Executive Officer Victorian Council of Churches.

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Elaine Syron-Perot, Photographer.

Dr Helen Szoke, Chief Executive, Oxfam Australia.

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Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs, Vice Chancellor’s Fellow Melbourne University, immediate Past President of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Patricia Turner, CEO National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

The Honourable Frank Vincent AO QC, Former Judge of Appeal Supreme Court of Victoria.

Ian Viner AO QC, Former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 1975-1978 (Malcolm Fraser Government - instituted the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) during his ministry.

John Waldron, Senior curator, artist and former President, Museums & Galleries Australia, Queensland.

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Dr Lilla Watson, a Kungalu and Birra Gubba woman, visual artist, prominent Elder, activist, feminist, and academic. Doctor of the QUT, and former visiting fellow across Australian Universities ‘Aboriginal Perspectives’, co-founder The Black Card.

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