



# Northern Land Council

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### Government NTER response marked by confusion

24 October 2008

Northern Land Council (NLC) Chief Executive, Kim Hill today described the Australian Government's response to the review of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) as confused and needing meaningful Aboriginal input.

While welcoming the Government's willingness to seek genuine Aboriginal involvement in the management of some of their affairs, Mr Hill said the continuing blanket application of compulsory income management will further marginalise people.

"We have a mixed bag from the Government. It's the same old policy confusion from Canberra and is guaranteed to further disempower our people. We are being marginalised by being locked out – we are being punished for being poor," Mr Hill said.

"While the NLC welcomes the government flagging that it will reinstate the *Racial Discrimination Act* and the acknowledgement that it must pay reasonable rent for its five-year leases, we are disappointed that blanket compulsory income management will remain. It's reminiscent of the old mission days where every aspect of our lives was controlled, from whom we could marry, where we could live, with whom we could congregate, and how we spent our money. Frankly, we are sick and tired of being experimented on."

Mr Hill said that Aboriginal people must be involved in a meaningful way in the management of their affairs and given the tools to help address the problems that have largely been created by underspending and misguided policy on the part of successive Federal and Territory governments.

Mr Hill said the Government has failed to demonstrate *any* connection between the enforcement of statutory five-year leases over communities and protecting children from sexual abuse and women from violence. He welcomed, however, the Government's recognition of the need to provide rental for the use of Aboriginal land.

"The Government has not provided any real evidence for continuing those aspects of the intervention that preclude Aboriginal involvement. Where is the transparency, the methodology and the evidence? This policy must be properly evaluated and we want input into the design of the evaluation process.

"We are pleased with the Government's commitment to paying reasonable rent over the communities it has acquired under five-year leases. We look forward to negotiating rental payments for the use of Aboriginal land, including the provision of leases for housing under the Strategic Indigenous Housing Infrastructure Program," Mr Hill said.

ENDS.

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