



# Northern Land Council

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Intervention report welcomed, exposing serious flaws in intervention**

**15 October 2008**

Northern Land Council (NLC) Chairman, Wali Wunungmurra, today welcomed the report of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Review Board and supports a number of its recommendations – particularly regarding the reinstatement of the permit system and the reinstatement of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

“As I have said before, permits give Aboriginal people a right to say who can enter their land, their private property – just like any other land owner. I hope the Australian government listens to this,” he said.

“The *Racial Discrimination Act* should be also be reinstated because Aboriginal people are Australian citizens and human beings and we should have the same rights as everybody else.

“By suspending this important law, the previous Australian government told the rest of the country and the world that it was okay to treat Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory as museum exhibits and that we are less than human – and this is an insult,” he said.

However, Mr Wunungmurra also said that the report exposes the federal intervention as an amateurish, ill-considered, and badly planned government policy. He also calls for the intervention to be fully evaluated to assess whether it is actually delivering what it was designed to do – “to protect Aboriginal children from abuse and build the basis for a better future”.

“While the NLC supports the general thrust of the report Aboriginal people have the right to know whether this initiative is actually working because we are the target – 45,500 Aboriginal men, women and children.

“I also encourage the Australian government to take note of the shameful facts that the Review has revealed:

- the monumental failure of governments to effectively communicate with Aboriginal people the rationale for the intervention and the impact it would have on peoples livelihoods, families, relationships, mental health and general well being.
- the intervention has not been evaluated, and there is no formal mechanism in place for this to occur.
- the intervention commenced without any demographic data; it did not know the “size and composition of the Indigenous population, particularly the number and age of children targeted by the intervention”.
- Income management was imposed on people without any individual assessment of their needs and capacity to fulfil their family responsibilities.

- The government has still not paid rent or compensation for compulsory acquisition of Aboriginal communities via five-year leases.

“The Government needs to go further than this Review which only makes one recommendation on enhancing education and none at all on vocational education and training and proper fully paid employment.

“All Aboriginal people in the NLC region want better access to health, housing, education and employment services, and we are willing to assist the government achieve a better future for all of us.

“But we are confused by the constantly and rapidly changing policies of governments without any recognition that we too want to have a say in how we live our lives.

“The Australian Government must sit down and talk to us properly as equals, and it is time to take the politics out of equation.”

**Media contact: Ursula Raymond – 08 8920 5114 or 0438 854 049**