

**The Mutitjulu Media Statement** (sent by Pat Gallasch on 27 June 2007)

**RE: John Howard's pre-election manufactured hysteria and self-serving military intervention at the cost of genuine support and services for Indigenous communities in regional Australia.**

**Leaders of the Mutitjulu community today questioned the need for a military occupation of their small community.**

We welcome any real support for indigenous health and welfare and even two police will assist, but the Howard Government declared an emergency at our community over two years ago - when they appointed an administrator to our health clinic - and since then we have been without a doctor, we have less health workers, our council has been sacked all our youth and health programmes have been cut.

We have no CEO and limited social and health services. The government has known about our overcrowding problem for at least 10 years and they've done nothing about it.

How do they propose keeping alcohol out of our community when we are 20 minutes away from 5 star hotel? Will they ban blacks from Yulara? We have been begging for an alcohol counsellor and a rehabilitation worker so that we can help alcoholics and substance abusers but those pleas have been ignored. What will happen to alcoholics when this ban is introduced? How will the government keep the grog runners out of our community without a permit system?

We have tried to put forward projects to make our community economically sustainable - like a simple coffee cart at the sunrise locations - but the government refuses to even consider them.

There is money set aside from the Jimmy Little foundation for a kidney dialysis machine at Mutitjulu, but National Parks won't let us have it. That would create jobs and improve indigenous health but they just keep stonewalling us. If there is an emergency, why won't Mal Brough fast track our kidney dialysis machine?

Some commentators have made much of the cluster of sexually transmitted diseases identified at our health clinic. People need to understand that Mutitjulu Health Clinic (now effectively closed) is a regional clinic and patients come from as far away as WA and SA; so to identify a cluster here is meaningless without seeing the confidential patient data.

The fact that we hold this community together with no money, no help, no doctor and no government support is a miracle. Any community, black or white would struggle if they were denied the most basic resources. Police and the Military are fine for logistics and coordination but healthcare, youth services, education and basic housing are more essential. Any programme must involve the people on the ground or it won't work. For example who will interpret for the military?

Our women and children are scared about being forcibly examined; surely there is a need to build trust. Even the doctors say they are reluctant to examine a young child without a parent's permission. Of course any child that is vulnerable or at risk should be immediately protected but a wholesale intrusion into our women and children's privacy is a violation of our human and sacred rights.

Where is the money for all the essential services? We need long term financial and political commitment to provide the infrastructure and planning for our community. There is an urgent need for 10's of millions of dollars to do what needs to be done. Will Mr Brough give us a commitment beyond the police and military?

The commonwealth needs to work with us to put health and social services, housing and education in place rather than treating Mutitjulu as a political football.

But we need to set the record straight:

- There is no evidence of any fraud or mismanagement at Mutitjulu - we have had an administration for 12 months that found nothing
- Mal Brough and his predecessor have been in control of our community for at least 12 months and we have gone backwards in services
- We have successfully eradicated petrol sniffing from our community in conjunction with government authorities and oil companies
- We have thrown suspected paedophiles out of our community using the permit system which our government now seeks take away from us.
- We will work constructively with any government, State, Territory or Federal that wants to help aboriginal people.