

Pilawuk's Speech for
Stop the NT Intervention Rally
Take a Stand Against Racism
(2nd anniversary of the national apology)

1pm, 13 February 2010, Parliament House, Kurna Country, Adelaide

Ngaiyi Pilawuk	I'm Pilawuk
Ngaiyi wur Ngangiwumerri ngi	My language is Ngangiwumerri
Dede ngaiyi Ngambu Nambu	My country is Ngambu Nambu

I feel really sad for my family. All this suddenly happened to them ... and they don't have any information about the Intervention, and they were never consulted about it.

Sorry means you won't do it again ... yet the intervention is just a repetition of the sort of things that happened to us, as the Stolen Generations.

Background

3 things have happened at about the same time in the NT

1. **The Intervention**
2. **Creation of Shires**
3. **CDEP being taken away**

It is difficult to look at these in isolation from each other. Together they have acted to disempower Aboriginal communities in the NT.

1. **The Intervention** in many more than 73 communities, began as military invasion. (For example, the communities at Daly River or homelands beyond Peppimenarti, which are not prescribed areas, are subject to most of the same restrictions as prescribed areas.)
2. Replacement of community councils with local government structures (**Shires**) throughout the NT.
3. **CDEP** (Community Development Employment Program) being taken away forced huge numbers of Aboriginal people onto *Job Seekers Allowance* and other Centrelink benefits.

Here are some stories from friends and family in the Northern Territory:

The intervention is ALL about law and order, not health and welfare ...

A few more police stations have been built. Housing for non-Aboriginal (mainly Intervention) workers has been imposed on communities. I am not aware of a single

house that has been built for Aboriginal community members - despite the MASSIVE housing issues in many communities. I am not aware of a single house where (despite the presence of trades people in the community building houses for government workers) even a toilet has been repaired!

No lease, no house: Yet, every Aboriginal person living on their own country (eg. under Native Title or the Commonwealth Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1976), who receive any form of Centrelink income support is being forced to give up their control of their land. If they don't sign a 5 or 90 year lease, they are told they cannot have housing. Going into a Government determined lease is the only way of having the possibility of getting a house (even though it appears incredibly unlikely that they will get one!) The lease will also require coming under the management control of the Northern Territory Housing Commission and its tenancy rules. If you get into rent arrears what's to happen? Evictions, as there is no private rental market established as yet. This is where private home ownership kicks in. I wonder how many of my people will become real estate managers in these circumstances. It leaves the land open for other third parties to come in and take control. Eventually this will remove the land from the people.

Income management is a nightmare! It applies to everyone receiving income support (eg. unemployment, single parent, family allowance, disability pension and aged pension), regardless of whether they are responsible for children. Any Aboriginal person on these benefits is under blanket management and have 50% of their income quarantined. People are given a Basics Card, and it can only be used for specified things - such as clothes, food and rent.

- The multinationals like Woolworths and Coles are making big money while the little business person loses. Aboriginal people are forced to shop there, and can not shop locally, or have the choice to buy fresh food from shops and markets ... because the card doesn't allow you to access any cash. Because income management precludes petrol, most families can only afford to go to town to shop once every week or two. If they don't have refrigeration (as many don't) they can only access fresh food for a few days every week or fortnight. The cost of transport in the absence of public transport is prohibitive and beyond most .
- I met a woman from one of the income managed communities. She was ill, and in Adelaide for medical treatment at Flinders Medical Centre. When she tried to purchase food and warm clothes, she couldn't find any shops that would take her card in the southern suburbs, and had to struggle into the city and shop at Woolies. She could have bought a couple of jumpers at an Op Shop for \$10 ... but didn't have any cash available to do this. SO ... she had to buy new, much more expensive, items at Woolies.

The intervention is destroying communities ...

The introduction of Shires, the depowering of Community Councils and the end of CDEP have worked together to turn active communities into welfare dependence.

Work that used to be done around the community, such as rubbish collection, beautification, housing repairs and care of local country ... is no longer happening. The removal of CDEP has achieved **nothing positive**. People who used to work, now hang around communities with nothing to do, or moving out of their communities into towns and cities (and all the accompanying social problems of unemployment). As my sister has

said: *It's not working. Our community was a working community and now it's not. Everyone's depressed and we've lost our whole sense of community identity.*

The people who used to be actively occupied in local community management, have had their role and purpose taken away. There have been massive changes to local government structures through the 'amalgamation' of individual communities into larger Shires. Instead of Aboriginal councils managing their own communities, Shires have been set up. These include a range of stakeholders (eg. mining and pastoral interests) ... not just Aboriginal people. These Shires have acquired many local community resources, and are not supported by local Aboriginal people. This extra level of government is putting pressure on local cultures, languages & kinship structures. The Shires are less democratic than community councils.

What potential the new shire structures may have had has not been realized as the education and training in the communities has not happened.

The shires are under resourced to do anything more than the basics in service provision and with a labour market mentality there is no innovation about job creation for the unemployed. The removal of the CDEP has made this even worse.

The shire clerks are in conflict often with the commonwealth business managers. There is this duplication and confusion on the ground level and no- one in the Governments takes responsibility for resolving it.

The opportunity under the Local government reform in setting up the shire was for local boards to be set up not to substitute for the removal of the local councils but to give locals the participation opportunities around issues that concerned them. Eg youth, cultural activities, festivals or particular service to any sector. They were to be set up and assisted by the shire administration but that has not even been attempted or encouraged. If they are encouraged and resourced properly then that may assist the community to get some of its control back.

The intervention is destroying families ...

Shaming men undermines family structures. Men have been portrayed as child molesters and that is so sad. This has impacted on families terribly. Some of my own relatives have said that they are scared of hugging their children and grandchildren, in case they are labelled.

The government has enormous power over people's lives. The new proposed legislation to 'reinstate' the Racial Discrimination Act, **will do nothing** to return power to Aboriginal families and communities. In fact, it will institutionalise so-called emergency power, and make them permanent. It will extend many of these problems to disadvantaged non-Aboriginal people on Centrelink benefits. This almost total control can break down friendships and family connections. For example, if a non-prescribed person has family or friends visiting and offers a glass of wine ... the fine is \$2,000 for a first 'offence' ... and can be jail for a second 'offence'.

The intervention is corrupting children ...

HUGE signs about pornography prohibition at the entrance to communities (prescribed areas), has created a whole new generation of children who know about pornography well before the time they should have ... all the children were asking the adults what pornography is, when the signs went up. This prejudices the community in an adverse way before any of the facts or the truth concerning the individuals living within these places. How would the resident of Adelaide like to be greeted by such a sign every time they drive home to their big wurlies! How would it affect their children? It hurts my people having the signs ... it's a shame job.

The intervention is creating racism ...

There's the story of a taxi driver who got fined \$2,000 for taking an Aboriginal man to the Alice town camps. He had a concealed flask of alcohol on him, which was found through a 'random' police check. The taxi driver asked whether he was supposed to search each individual before agreeing to transport them. The answer was "yes". Not surprisingly, this driver will no longer take Aboriginal people in his taxi!

Let's remember that when the rights of the weakest in our society are so easily trodden on and we do nothing. then it is not too long before we are all subjected to the same type of rights denial and dictatorship.

Conclusion

Yibaeye mindadetyengi	Walking together
mumba tyityipi	All of us
ngambikat nime	In solidarity
ngini	Into the future