



JOSEPHITE LEADERS' SOCIAL ACTION OFFICE

INTERVENTION ANNIVERSARY PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO GET IT RIGHT

On this first anniversary of the announcement of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, the Sisters of St Joseph urge the Government, in its forthcoming Review, to look at evidence on the ground and listen to the experience of Aboriginal people living with the Intervention.

They want the Government to ensure that the same spirit of respect and cooperation apparent at the time of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations underpins the review process.

The Sisters of St Joseph number over 1200 Sisters nationally and live and work in Aboriginal communities in The Kimberley, Amata, Central Western NSW, regional Victoria and South Australia and in most capital cities.

Speaking on behalf of the leaders of Josephite Congregations and Provinces across Australia, Sr Noelene Quinane, said 'While we are aware that there is not a united voice among Aboriginal, or non-Aboriginal, people on aspects of the Northern Territory Intervention, it would be a tragedy if the energy and momentum we've recently experienced in Aboriginal affairs were to diminish.

'We know Aboriginal people are strongly supportive of some aspects of the Intervention, but are strongly opposed to others,' Sr Noelene said.

'Thus we welcome the announcement of the Review to determine progress made by the Intervention and the evidence-based examination it promises of Aboriginal peoples' experience of the measures implemented. We look forward to its recommendations to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal people.

'It has been of concern to us that the measures that make up the Intervention reflect few of the recommendations from the *Little Children are Sacred* report. We have been especially concerned about those aspects of the Intervention which rely on the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act, and also the 'one size fits all' approach to many of its measures. This immediately suggests that the Intervention would be unlikely to benefit all the people affected by it.

'It seems to us to be important to go back to the *Little Children are Sacred Report* and look to implement its recommendations, which were about preventing child abuse, but also about consultation with Aboriginal communities, housing, education and the provision of services in remote areas which are basic human rights in any community.

'There doesn't have to be a dichotomy between child protection measures and human rights issues. In an advanced and sophisticated society such as ours, surely we can work towards the achievement of both,' Sr Noelene said.

'Aboriginal communities are entitled to receive the same benefits and services, and their children the same protections, as are available to other Australians. Proposals have been put forward, mainly emanating from the Aboriginal community, which maximise the protection of children without racially discriminating against Aboriginal people.

'The Prime Minister, in his now famous address to Parliament in February, said *'it is time to right the wrongs of the past and so move forward with confidence to the future.'* This anniversary, and the Review which accompanies it, provides us with just such an opportunity,' Sr Noelene concluded.

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