



Refresh Australia!

Add values to build prosperity



Refresh Indigenous Australia
A future strong in culture, health and genuine partnerships

$$$$$ + \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{Renewable} \\ \text{energy} \end{array} \right\} + \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{Indigenous:} \\ \text{genuine} \\ \text{partnerships} \end{array} \right\} + \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{Work/life} \\ \text{balance} \end{array} \right\} = \text{Refreshed Australia}$$

BRIEF NOTES ON THE ISSUE

The Federal Government's intervention in the NT has raised the awareness of the Australian community at large to the issue of child abuse and neglect in Northern Territory Communities. But it has done much more as many concerned Australians and organisations have been quick to note. With a Federal Election in the wings it is timely for us to keep the issue of Indigenous disadvantage to the forefront of the agenda.

The Catholic Bishops of Australia is one among many groups which have responded to the Federal Government's intervention in the NT. In their statement they included the following points:

- The high incidence in remote Aboriginal communities of child sexual abuse and other unacceptable threats to children's wellbeing has been a matter of growing public concern for some time.
- Numerous enquiries and commissioned reports have raised these issues. The most recent such report is *Little Children are Sacred* by Rex Wild and Pat Anderson.
- While this is not a time for allocating blame, all Australians should accept some collective responsibility for redressing the current shameful state of affairs, and recognise that past wrongs are reflected in present legacies. As Pope John Paul II said when he addressed Indigenous Australians in Alice Springs in 1986: *What has been done cannot be undone. But what can now be done to remedy the deeds of yesterday must not be put off till tomorrow.*

However, the Catholic Bishops also expressed a number of significant concerns about the 'emergency response'. They addressed their concerns by making a number of recommendations. These recommendations included the following:

- Child abuse and child poverty must be addressed by a long-term and comprehensive response -- tackling such key causative factors as inadequate social services and infrastructure (including housing), inadequate numeracy and literacy, poor employment opportunities, substance abuse, and community breakdown. Guaranteed, long-term and adequate funding is essential.
- The response must be respectful of Indigenous culture and identity, and must be undertaken in full and genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities themselves. History clearly demonstrates that effective solutions cannot simply be imposed from above.

Full text available at www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bishops/confpres/20070705451.htm

BECOME BETTER INFORMED

The Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the NT have released a detailed and proactive response to the Federal Government's interventions to address child abuse in the Northern Territory. The paper is on the ACOSS website: www.acoss.org.au/ -- go to Publications, then Indigenous Issues.

TAKE ACTION to urge our political leaders to

- form genuine partnerships with Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory
- develop effective solutions to address the issues of child sexual abuse and neglect.

TAKE PART IN OUR ECARD CAMPAIGN

Go to our website www.sao.clriq.org.au/refresh_australia/ and follow the links to the ecard.

Send ecards to some or all of the following:

- Mal Brough, Minister for Indigenous Affairs
- Peter Costello, Treasurer
- Kevin Rudd, Leader of the Opposition
- Jenny Macklin, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs
- Wayne Swann, Shadow Treasurer
- the candidates in your own electorate

to urge the government and opposition to adopt a bipartisan approach in the Northern Territory Intervention and to include Indigenous community leaders in finding effective solutions to the issues of child sexual abuse and neglect.

(Note: It is not possible to send an ecard to the Prime Minister. Send him an email through his website at www.pm.gov.au/contact/index.cfm or write to him directly -- Hon John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 -- using points from those listed below.)

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FEDERAL MEMBER AND OPPOSITION CANDIDATE

Write to or arrange to visit your present sitting member and candidate for the opposition and ask to speak to them or write to them about the campaign -- particularly the issue regarding establishing genuine partnerships with Indigenous community leaders.

Points you may wish to include when writing or speaking with Ministers, Members of Parliament, or electoral candidates:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should be able to live a life free from violence and abuse. The Federal Government is to be commended for taking action but would get a better outcome if it sought input into its emergency measures.
- The Federal Government has called child abuse a national emergency -- where is the national responses from all the States and Territories?
- Issues about land use and permits in the NT should be dealt with separately -- not as part of an emergency child protection response.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities have a right to expect that basic essential services such as police, child protection, preschools, schools, health services and housing are available.
- The Federal Government and the Opposition need to work together with Aboriginal communities in a long-term commitment with defined shorter-term goals.

Join Oxfam's Close the Gap and/or ANTaR Campaigns for Indigenous health equity:

- www.oxfam.org.au/campaigns/indigenous/action.php
- www.antar.org.au/content/view/492/1/

Keep abreast of the campaign through our website:

- www.sao.clriq.org.au/refresh_australia/

Be better informed -- acting on new knowledge goes a long way ...
Knowledge, deliberation and discernment shift opinion and attitudes