



## UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA NORTHERN SYNOD

### **Synod Statement regarding Federal Government Intervention in Indigenous Communities in the Northern Territory**

*“We are now under three laws - our own Aboriginal Law, Australian Law for all Australians and this new white man’s law for Aboriginal People in the Northern Territory” - An Arnhem Land Church Leader*

Through our partnerships as indigenous and non-indigenous members of the Northern Synod we share a sense of pain, loss, confusion, and sadness generated by the Federal Government’s Intervention in Northern Territory indigenous communities. Our Synod members from Anangu Lands in South Australia and from the Kimberley in Western Australia are also very concerned.

At our annual Synod meeting held 30 September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2007 we heard many cries for help and expressions of concern with comments such as:

- “Is there a war between black and white people?” (a child from Galiwin’ku.)
- “We heard they are coming to take away our children.” (a woman from Ramingining)
- “There are so many voices; it is all crazy, leaving us with a feeling of hopelessness.” (a man from Galiwin’ku)

We share a strong sense of betrayal concerning the Federal Government’s lack of consideration and incorporation of the recommendations from the *‘Little Children are Sacred’* Report into its legislative response.

While the Northern Synod welcomes government action in seeking to address sexual abuse and also supports initiatives that will keep our communities safe, this Synod condemns the current legislative response as abusive, intrusive, and damaging. Of particular concern is the removal of the Permit system for entry into Aboriginal Land and the lack of consultation with indigenous people on this matter and on other major reforms contained within the various legislative changes that have been enacted.

The Northern Synod calls on the Australian Government to enter into a real partnership with indigenous people in the Northern Territory by enacting legislation that upholds human rights, affirms self-determination and enhances the capacity of individuals and communities to contribute to solving issues of concern within their own lives.

Therefore we believe that the Government should

- a) repeal the *NT Emergency Response Act 2007*; and
- b) start afresh through consultative processes to develop a range of responses that directly address the recommendations of the '*Little Children are Sacred*' Report.

We encourage all governments to build on successful community development projects that have involved Aboriginal consultation and decision-making, as demonstrated by Aboriginal Resource and Development Services and Arnhemland Progress Association.

This Synod resolves to:

- release this statement to media agencies;
- request the Assembly to incorporate this statement within an election strategy that addresses the Federal intervention within a wider human rights framework for all Australians;
- encourage all members of the Uniting Church to place these issues of concern before their local candidate and seek their endorsement;
- encourage Uniting Church congregations to build and strengthen partnerships with Indigenous people affected by the legislation and participate in local public actions in line with this statement; and
- affirm the commitment of the Synod and all its members (indigenous and non-indigenous) to live in partnership and solidarity with all Indigenous people.

***For further information, contact:***

***Rev Wendell Flentje***

***Moderator***

***Uniting Church in Australia - Northern Synod***

***Tel: (08) 8927 3101 (office)***

***0417 859 657 (mobile)***