



North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency Ltd

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 17 October 2008

NAAJA's Response to the NTER Review

NAAJA welcomes many aspects of the NTER Review Board's report and commends the recognition of the damage caused by the lack of consultation, racial discrimination and humiliation that Aboriginal people have suffered.

"The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the NT will only be bridged when Aboriginal people are consulted properly and both governments work in partnership with Aboriginal people to provide them with the breadth of essential services enjoyed by the wider Australian community," Priscilla Collins, CEO of NAAJA said.

"NAAJA urges the Government to adopt the recommendation that all its actions respect Australia's human rights obligations and conform with the Racial Discrimination Act.

"We support the lifting of blanket income management but we are very concerned about the Federal Government's trial in 6 places in the Northern Territory to suspend or cancel people's Centrelink payments if their children are not enrolled in, or attending, school. This trial is being proposed despite the Northern Territory Government and the NTER Review Report saying that remote education in the NT is in crisis.

"NAAJA is also extremely disappointed about the lack of attention given in the NTER Review Report to crime prevention.

"NAAJA is only too well aware of the terrible impact of substance abuse on Aboriginal people. This is why we are disappointed with the recommendations about alcohol. The report acknowledges that the current alcohol restrictions are not working. Yet the Review Board only recommends that the current restrictions remain in place and makes a general comment that 'greater support should be given to people through supply, demand and harm reduction strategies,' without saying what these strategies should be.

"We have been urging the Federal and Northern Territory Government to introduce the following measures, across the NT:

- a) set days during the week when take away alcohol cannot be purchased;
- b) increasing the prices of cheap take away alcohol;
- c) reducing the number of liquor outlets and increasing the restrictiveness of the conditions under which they operate; and
- d) strengthening the powers of the Northern Territory Licensing Commission and increasing its independence, accountability and resources.

.../2



North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency Ltd

“Unless, there is far greater attention paid to crime prevention – including alcohol policy – police will be powerless to stop violence. Of the eight alleged murders that have taken place in the “Top End” region since mid-April of this year, six happened in Darwin, one in Borroloola and one in Batchelor. All three places are serviced by permanent police stations.

“We query the Review’s recommendation that the 18 new temporary police stations should be made permanent. The cost of a permanent police station in Galiwink’u was \$7.7 million. If this cost is replicated 18 times, we are going to spend \$138.6 million on new police stations.

“We agree with the Police Association that law and order needs to be addressed by a coordinated multi-agency response with mainstream agencies (Health, Education, Welfare, Housing, Planning and Infrastructure, etc) being properly resourced to provide appropriate services in remote communities.

“NAAJA is worried that urgently needed resources will be spent on making the police stations permanent and won’t then be available for other services.

“We find it very difficult to respond to people who ask when there will be any assistance to remedy their extremely overcrowded living conditions when they can see plenty of money available for an expensive new police station on the outskirts of their community.

“NAAJA supports the NTER Review’s calls for ‘more consistent community policing practices’ and the need for police to have a ‘deeper understanding of the language, etiquette and cultural world view’ of Aboriginal people. The request by Aboriginal people for more police, needs to be understood as referring to police that want to work alongside communities to resolve community issues.”

Contact:

Priscilla Collins (61) 0427045665

email: priscilla.collins@naaja.org.au

NB: For copies of NAAJA’s submission to the NTER Review Board contact: Helen Wodak (08) 8982 5131 email: helen.wodak@naaja.org.au

The joint CAALAS/NAAJA submission to the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities Senate is available at:
www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/committee/indig_ctte/submissions/sub24.pdf