

Aboriginal leaders call for big February 13 protest

by Nick G.

Aboriginal leaders are calling for a national day of action against the Northern Territory intervention and for Aboriginal rights on Saturday 13 February, 2010.

This is to mark the second anniversary of Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generation.

They intend to state loudly and clearly that "Sorry" means you won't do it again!"

This refers to the fact that the injustices of racism inherent in the creation of the Stolen Generation and revived by the Howard Government's August 2007 NT intervention, are being repeated by the government of Prime Minister Rudd who apologised to the Aboriginal people two years ago.

Removing Aboriginal control over Aboriginal communities and

will receive no housing until they surrender their traditional rights to land and sign 40-year leases.

The discriminatory welfare quarantining or income management, which required the suspension of the NT Racial Discrimination Act (RDA), has only led to greater poverty, social dislocation and community tension.

And yet the Federal Government plans to extend compulsory welfare quarantining to non-Aboriginal Territorians and then to other "areas of social disadvantage" around the country.

This is a desperate act to hide the racist bias of intervention measures and will only end up hurting other poor communities. The expansion of welfare quarantining should be opposed.

The latest Federal Government progress report on the intervention for the first time makes some pre- and



subordinating Aboriginal interests to those of giant mining, pastoral and finance companies was at the heart of the intervention.

To justify this craven service to the corporations, the Howard government demonised Aboriginal communities as places where "rivers of alcohol" flowed and children were sexually abused.

Indeed, the little children were abused – by the Government – which based its intervention on a report into their circumstances and then ignored the recommendations that arose from the report, implementing only two of the ninety-seven that were proposed.

Going backwards

So what has this extraordinary military-led intervention into NT Aboriginal communities achieved?

What it has *not* achieved is housing. Not a single house has been built and communities are being told that they

post-intervention statistics available for prescribed communities.

Child health care referrals and specialist audiological and dental referrals are down, yet reports of child malnutrition are up. This is despite, or perhaps because of, the restriction of 15,000 BasicsCards holders to 85 licensed stores and \$200 million of Aboriginal income being "managed".

Alcohol, drug and substance abuse incidents are all up, and there are more domestic violence incidents, despite a far greater police presence.

Adding to the tensions is the push to get people out of "remote" (from what? from whom?) homelands and into a handful of centralised "hubs" and the severe restrictions on the use and teaching of Aboriginal languages.

Aboriginal communities don't deny that measures are needed to address problems in their communities. But they want to be involved in finding the solutions. They want to be empowered through genuine processes of

Editorial

New Year brings immediate challenges

Workers will continue to resist monopoly capital's relentless attacks on wages, conditions and safety in the workplace. For the Rudd/Gillard government's Fair Work Australia, a paler version of WorkChoices, it's business as usual to protect the monopoly corporations' profit making above all else. The fight against the anti-democratic and repressive ABCC will continue to galvanise workers and many others. The working class will resist, but needs a deeper awareness of the main class forces in Australia, not only in its daily clashes with capital, but also for the future direction of the entire class struggle.

Two years of the Rudd Labor government snuggling up to big business has started to dim the previously high expectations of many workers. The shift in Liberal leadership back to open reaction, and its declarations of restoring the old WorkChoices, opens the way for compromising watering down workers' demands and struggles. It will be used by Labor, and plays into the hands of the entire ruling class. Class conscious workers will guard against these traps that could lead to further sell-outs. Drawing on lessons from experiences like the *Your Rights at Work, Worth Fighting For* campaign should instil confidence and reaffirm the power of the organised and mobilised working class.

There are other equally urgent matters requiring the Australian people's attention. After Copenhagen, the obvious way on climate warming and protecting the environment lies with mass mobilisations of ordinary people. Solutions are available and could be put to use immediately. But, as long as the economy is in the clutches of monopoly capital and multinational corporations, little significant change will come.

The rights and living conditions of Indigenous Australians and shameful land grabs by mining monopolies are crying out for action and solidarity. A national struggle by teachers and parents for a properly funded, inclusive public education system that values and respects teachers and students and does not promote individualistic dog-eat-dog capitalist competition in our children, is gathering momentum. Better public hospitals and healthcare is another critical demand. Demands to revitalise and expand Australia's manufacturing industry continue to attract wide support.

This year's state and federal elections will consume a lot of attention. There are pitfalls in shifting the focus away from the main task of building people's mass movements and organisation on the ground. Whilst most people still have faith in parliament – with growing degrees of cynicism – reinforcing capitalist illusions that parliament is the main vehicle for change and the answer to many problems, abandons the workers and the people to capitalist ideas, weakening their capacity to organise and fight as a class.

At the base of these immediate problems lies the imperialist domination of Australia by international capital and multinational corporations who control the main economic and political life lines of the country. The longer term job of freeing Australia from imperialist domination arises from today's battles and is the first stage along Australia's path to socialism.

consultation and decision-making.

"We are fed up with the federal government's controls and measures... forced onto us from the outside," said Richard Downs, spokesperson for the Alywarr people at Ampilatwatja, who have established a special protest camp. "We are outcasts, isolated from all decision-making," he added

But both the Howard and Rudd governments are committed to serving the interests of imperialism and the giant corporations at the heart of its operation.

Still playing "Father knows best", Rudd has broken his promise to reinstate the NT Racial Discrimination Act by October 2009 and has indicated through Minister Jenny Macklin that even when the Act is reinstated, the provisions that allow for "special measures" to benefit Aboriginal people will be used

to continue income management and other discriminatory practices of the intervention.

The planning of actions for February 13 is underway for Alice Springs, Sydney and Melbourne. No doubt actions in other cities will be announced in the near future and will be strongly supported.

Demands for the protest are:

- Stop the NT intervention – Sorry means you won't do it again
- Reinstatement of the RDA - racism is not a special measure
- Land rights, not leases
- Quarantine racism, not welfare
- Self-determination - not assimilation
- Aboriginal controlled housing and services for all communities