



Dear fellow covenanters,

Welcome to the first edition of the Covenanting Newsletter for 2011. Hi! My name is Denise Champion and I am now in the role as Covenanting Coordinator. As part of the Mission Resourcing Network, I am looking forward to working with congregations and agencies to bring a greater awareness and better understanding of Aboriginal issues. We have an opportunity to be part of God's work and bring healing to this nation.



I would like to introduce myself.

Nunga, ngai mityi Deniseanha, Ngatyu Adnyamathana mityi utyu, Warrikanha.

Hello my name is Denise, my Adnyamathana name is Warrikanha (means second born and female in my family).

Nyaityu Adnyamathana Yuartu ,Flinders Ranges utyu ngatyu yarta.

I am an Adnyamathana Woman and my traditional homelands are the Flinders Ranges.

Ngai utyu arrarru

My Adnyamathana Moiety group (ancestral line) is the North Wind.

I have 3 adult children Joel, Candace and Shellander, and 4 grandchildren Jakeevia, Jae ann, Seth and Samson.

I am excited at the opportunities that I will have as Covenanting Coordinator to meet many new people and to make many new friends along the way.

I am available to speak, and should you or your congregation require help or resources or any information regarding Aboriginal issues I would be glad to help wherever I can.

Please consider this important announcement from the assembly of the Uniting Church. Please add your voice to this call. Speak or write to your local member.

UCA leaders join the call for Aboriginal rights in the Northern Territory

8 February 2011

Leaders from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, Rev Ken Sumner and Rev Shayne Blackman, and the President of the Uniting Church in Australia, Rev Alistair Macrae, have added their signature to a statement from prominent Australians urging a new approach to the policies of the Northern Territory Intervention which secure, rather than violate, the rights of Australia's Indigenous people.

This initiative was accompanied by a statement from Aboriginal elders, including members of the Uniting Church, and the Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM, which is printed on the back page:

Statement on Aboriginal Rights by leading Australians

Australia has faced questioning at the United Nations by member states and independent experts regarding its Indigenous policies. The failure to restore the rights of Aboriginal people is currently being scrutinised under

the Universal Periodic Review process of the UN Human Rights Council and was criticised in 2010 by both the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Such scrutiny can only reveal just how far Australia is lagging behind international standards on human rights policies. Changes are urgently needed.

In such a context, we have become increasingly concerned by the failure of the Federal Government, with the tacit support of the Opposition, to properly address problems facing Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. In particular, the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the Intervention) has been progressed without credible consultation with, or the approval of, Aboriginal people.

While there are some limited aspects of the Intervention that have been viewed positively in some Aboriginal communities, it is the compulsory nature of the policies which are of concern.

It is our belief that inequality cannot be addressed by the removal of control from affected peoples over their lives and land, as is current Government policy. Positive change requires respect and genuine engagement with the people themselves at the local level, rather than an isolated policy development in Canberra.

Examples of the failure of policies include:

- The delayed, incomplete and flawed reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act.
- The entrenchment of discrimination against Aborigines in the criminal law of the NT by failing to repeal s. 91 of the NTER Act which ensures that no customary law or cultural practice, excuses, justifies, authorises, requires or lessens the seriousness of any criminal behaviour with which the Crimes Act is concerned.
- The retention and widening of involuntary income management in order to give it a veneer of non discrimination.
- The failure to provide proper housing exemplified by the slow pace of doing so and the fact that of new houses built by Government under the SIHIP programme to alleviate overcrowding, there is a failure to take into account the size or requirements of the average Aboriginal family.
- The failure to provide full time education to Aboriginal children, which is a right of all Australian children.

Examples include:

- The fact that the 46 Aboriginal Homeland Learning Centres for which the NT Department of Education and Training is responsible have never been allocated full-time qualified teachers and are reliant on fly-in fly-out teachers, often for only one or two days per week.
- The failure of NTER measures such as the policy of removal of welfare entitlements where there is unsatisfactory school attendance, in that recent figures from the NT Department of Education² show a steady fall in attendance at schools in very remote areas between 2006-7 and 2009-10.
- Maintaining the intervention despite evidence such as:
 - The Health Impact Assessment launched in March 2010, which found that the Intervention could potentially lead to profound long-term damage to overall health and cultural integrity.
 - The 2010 Enquiry into NT Child Protection which links health problems to community disadvantage and poverty associated with overcrowding, unsafe and stressful environments, poor community infrastructure, poor nutrition and limited health care, all of which were supposed to have been addressed by the intervention.

The Government's policy approach must move from one of bureaucratic control by Canberra to one of recognition of Aboriginal leadership, negotiation, capacity building and direct input by Aboriginal people to local government decision-making. Without the direct engagement with Aboriginal people, policy changes will fail. With Aboriginal leaders, Government must commit to a policy of support by developing economies, encouraging investment and creating jobs by improving transport and communication systems, and where appropriate, the use of taxation incentives.

Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory must have choice and must not be forced to abandon their lands and heritage in order to obtain services that are automatically provided to other Australians. The vision that is created must be one that is shared by both black and white.

We accordingly call upon the Government to start afresh, to comply with our international obligations by bringing the Northern Territory Intervention to an end, including the termination of involuntary income management and securing Aboriginal rights in accordance with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Present flawed legislation including that purporting to re-instate the Racial Discrimination Act and s 91 of the NTER Act should be repealed and the Racial Discrimination Act reintroduced in an unqualified form.

Signed:

Diana Batzias
Professor Larissa Behrendt
Rev Shayne Blackman
The Hon Sally Brown AM
Julian Burnside QC
Fred Chaney AO
Patrick Dodson
Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC
Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser AC CH GCL PC
The Most Reverend Philip Freier
Rev Dr Djinyini Gondarra OAM
Hon Paul Guest QC
Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM
Phil Lynch
Professor Tim McCormack
Assoc Professor Sarah Maddision

Rev Alistair Macrae
Hon Colleen Moore
Hon Ron Merkel QC
Graeme Mundine
Hon Alastair Nicholson AO RFD QC
Peter Norden AO
Dr Sarah Prichard
Professor Cheryl Saunders AO
Brother Paul Smith AM
Professor Fiona Stanley AC
Rev Ken Sumner
Assoc Professor John Tobin
Bret Walker SC
Brian Walters SC
Hon Ian Viner AO QC

Prayer Points

- Pray for the restoration of the Racial Discrimination Act in the NT and for **fair treatment of all Aboriginal Australians**. Pray that governments stop forcing “reforms” against Aboriginal people’s rights and against the evidence (e.g. bi-lingual education). Pray that **that true listening will occur** when consulting.
- Pray for congregations as they celebrate or don’t celebrate **Reconciliation Sunday**; that hearts may be opened and minds challenged.
- Pray for the **National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples**, that it might courageously represent Aboriginal people to government and that in turn government will listen.
- Pray for the **Matthews family in Port Augusta** that they may soon be returned to full health.
- Pray for **David & Kim Wright** as they take the load from the Matthews and minister to the Aboriginal people in Port Augusta.
- Pray for the **Kalparrin Community**. Pray that a united voice has come from the meeting in Port Augusta last year and that respect for and self determination might be restored to all Aboriginal communities by governments.
- Pray for the Salisbury Congress Congregation, their Chairperson, Nelson Varcoe and Council members and congregation as they take on their own interim ministry. Pray that a suitable minister might be found. Pray for extra bus drivers.
- Pray for all Aboriginal children going to school or not going. Pray that **equitable funding is provided for ALL schools** and that solutions may be found for those children not attending.
- Pray for justice and a ‘fair go’ for Aboriginal people and the ‘unfinished business’.
- **Pray for a Treaty.**

Palya, Go with God,

Peter

May 2010

Covenanting Volunteer
Uniting Church SA
prussell@sa.uca.org.au
(Usually only in the Synod Office 1 day a week or less!)

‘Til we meet again,
Hold the warmth of the camp fire in your heart
And may the Creator Spirit, the God of peace,
Always walk with you.

Denise Champion

Denise Champion
Covenanting Coordinator
Mission Resourcing Network
Uniting Church SA

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Note: The Covenanting Coordinator position is only half time. Office hours are usually in the first half of the week, Tuesday to Wednesday when not out and about. The Covenanting Coordinator is able to preach at Services, and talk to Church Councils, Bible Study and Fellowship Groups. For further details contact the Covenanting Coordinator. This and past copies of this newsletter may be downloaded from the website:

<http://mrn.sa.uca.org.au/covenanting/covenanting-whats-new.html>

If this newsletter has been forwarded to you and you wish to be included on the regular Covenanter's Email Newsletter List please email me (Peter Russell: prussell@sa.uca.org.au) your request.

The resources, events and conferences listed in this newsletter are not necessarily officially supported by the Uniting Church. Information is provided as presented by the relevant organisations. The views expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily reflect the policy of the Uniting Church.

TO THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA

7 FEBRUARY 2011

We are the people of the land. The land is our mother. For more than 40,000 years we have been caring for this land. We are its natural farmers.

Now, after so many years of dispossession, we find once again we are being thrust towards a new dispossession. Our pain and our fear are real. Our people are again being shamed.

Under the Intervention we lost our rights as human beings, as Australians citizens, as the First People of the Land. We feel very deeply the threat to our languages, our culture and our heritage. Through harsh changes we have had removed from us all control over our communities and our lives. Our lands have been compulsorily taken from us. We have been left with nothing.

The legislation under which we now live does not comply with international law. It is discriminatory. We are no longer equal to other Australians. We are no longer equal to you.

As people in our own land, we are shocked by the failure of democratic processes, of the failure to consult with us and of the total disregard for us as human beings. We demand the return of our rights, our freedom to live our traditional lives, support to develop our economic enterprises to develop jobs and to work towards a better future for all our peoples.

So extreme have been the actions against our people that we must appeal to all people of Australia to walk with us in true equality. Speak out and help to put an end to the nightmare that Northern Territory Aboriginal people are experiencing on a daily basis.



Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM, Utopia



Rev. Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM, Galiwin'ku



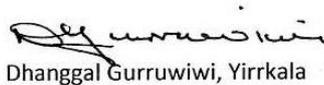
Harry Nelson, Yuendumu



Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann AM, Nauiyu



Djapirri Mununggirritj, Yirrkala



Dhanggal Gurruwiwi, Yirrkala

<http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/images/pdfs/issues/indigenous-justice/media/eldersstatementfeb2011.pdf>