

## **Government move on NT Intervention may cause further grief, Archbishop Freier warns**

The Federal Government is in danger of adding to the hurt and grief of Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory caused by the Intervention, Archbishop Philip Freier warned today.

Dr Freier, who is the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne and the former Bishop of the Northern Territory, has expressed concern that the Federal Government's consultations in the Northern Territory over the Intervention and its discussion paper 'Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory,' have been organised without adequate preparation or warning.

"Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory are already feeling disenfranchised by the Intervention, and the fact that insufficient time has been allowed for the 'Stronger Futures' discussion paper to be considered before the public consultations begin may further alienate them and effectively deny them their democratic right to be heard," he said.

The paper was released on 22 June, less than a week before consultations began on 28 June.

"Announcing that consultations will begin so soon after the release of the discussion paper is extremely disappointing, as it obviously makes it difficult for the paper to be read and properly considered before the consultations scheduled for June to August. Furthermore, that fact that it has only been published in English is a barrier to understanding and genuine consultation for many Indigenous Australians."

He is calling on the Government to ensure that interpreters are available at all public consultations.

Archbishop Freier is also signatory to a letter sent to Minister Jenny Macklin on 27 June, and signed by Alastair Nicholson AO, Indigenous leader Dr Djinyini Gondarra OAM, and other concerned community leaders. The letter states, "If there is to be a new era of co-operation" between the Government and the Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory, then "a new approach to engagement" is required "which takes account of language barriers, the inability of many to read the written language and the overall problems of communication."