Reinstate Racial Discrimination Act in NT, Law Council Urges

The Law Council has welcomed a report which recommends that Government actions affecting Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory must conform to the Racial Discrimination Act.

The Report of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board, released yesterday, was commissioned to report 12 months after the commencement of the NT Intervention.

Law Council President Ross Ray QC said, “The Review Board has identified several critical human rights concerns which must be addressed before the NT Intervention continues.”

“The Racial Discrimination Act must be reinstated in respect of all legislation governing the Intervention, and it must be made clear that all actions carried out under the Intervention are subject to racial discrimination laws.”

Mr Ray said the Law Council had condemned the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act from the outset of the Intervention and had consistently called for all protections against racial discrimination laws to be reinstated.

The Law Council has also been a strong critic of the suspension of the permit system, compulsory income management, prohibition against consideration of the cultural background of Indigenous offenders in sentencing and compulsory acquisition of Aboriginal land.

“The report confirms the discriminatory and damaging effect of compulsory income management and the importance of fully reinstating the Aboriginal lands permit system. In addition, the report rightly calls for a guarantee of natural justice for Aboriginal people affected by decisions and measures implemented under the intervention and a commitment to genuine consultation and partnership with Aboriginal people,” Mr Ray said.

“The Law Council welcomes this timely report and calls upon all sides of Parliament to commit to implementing its recommendations without delay,” Mr Ray concluded.

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