



# Victorian Council of Churches

(Inc.A0036552E)

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## A Statement from the Executive of the Victorian Council of Churches

The Executive of the Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) calls upon the Federal Government to take the opportunity provided by the reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act to review all Aboriginal policies to ensure that they are in line with Australia's international obligations.

UN Special Rapporteur Professor James Anaya has pointed out that the Northern Territory Intervention, in its current form and in its delivery, "is incompatible with Australia's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Australia is a party to both treaties. The intervention is also incompatible with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Australia supports".

The VCC Executive could draft an alternative set of principles to guide our statement based on the Gospel to which we bear witness. However, we join Prof Anaya in drawing attention to commitments made by successive Australian Governments to those principles articulated in UN Treaties.

The Executive of the VCC acknowledges the goodwill of governments in attempting to address decades of neglect in the areas of Aboriginal policy, planning and service delivery. However, the VCC also believes it is the duty and responsibility of government to ensure that legislation, policies and actions comply in all respects with obligations to which Australia is signatory or for which it has declared its support.

Furthermore, the Executive of the VCC calls on governments to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal peoples, in a way that respects and recognises the differing needs of each community. We uphold the right, and necessity, of Aboriginal people to be directly involved in the development and decision-making processes that lead to the development of services and policies that will affect their lives.

The Executive of the Victorian Council of Churches calls upon Prime Minister Rudd to ensure that Professor Anaya's report will be viewed as a valuable contribution to expert policy advice.

As a nation Australia is being called upon to make changes to Aboriginal policy in line with accepted world principles. The world will judge us by our preparedness to act.

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