

To whom it may concern; The Intervention and Aborigines,

Aboriginal Intervention Programme

I was amazed that none of the reasons why the Aborigines were protesting on Australia day got any media attention only the fracas with the prime minister and the opposition leader seemed to get publicity. That is appalling!

I have not recently been in touch with any remote communities except Yuendumu, where I have visited friends. I know my Yuendumu friends are very worried about the effects of the intervention since they see it as taking away people's personal responsibility and also in Yuendumu leading to work possibilities for Aborigines disappearing.

In Yuendumu there are three aboriginal run businesses. The social club, which used to run the main supermarket, the mining company which ran a subsidiary shop with bread, milk some food and vegetables and both of these also sold petrol, diesel etc and the mining company does car repairs etc. As well as those there is the Art centre, which is a real money earner when there are tourists coming through. The two aboriginal owned stores which are managed by white people but employ Aborigines where possible, tried to resist using the income management card. The commonwealth government responded by supporting and introducing another store which agreed to use the income management system and this store is now undermining the business of the two Aboriginal owned stores as most of the community are forced to use it. This means that there is less employment available and that those stores are struggling to survive. The effect is also very debasing for the Aboriginal sense of ownership and control in the town.

Another reason why there is pressure on jobs, at least in Yuendumu, is the pressure to teach mostly in English, which has meant that the teachers of aboriginal languages are loosing their jobs.

New buildings are being contracted out so that the labour comes from outside Yuendumu meaning fewer opportunities for employment.

I suspect similar stresses may apply to other remote communities. If we want to get Aborigines off welfare this is the wrong way to go.

I am,
Dr Liselott Muhlen-Schulte,