

Keeping people talking



Judy Nixon

At 21 years-of-age, the Papulu Appar-kari Aboriginal Corporation seems to have a very mixed brief.

The centre has been around for more than two decades now and chief executive officer Karan Hayward said its major focus is the preservation of Aboriginal languages in the Barkly.

But Papulu Appar-kari is also a CDEP provider.

"We're a CDEP organisation. We employ about 142 CDEP positions but our core function is language and culture and mainly making sure we've got it there for the future generations," Ms Hayward said.

"Basically we're a multimedia centre, we produce our own books. We have lots of little arms and businesses around the place but language and culture's our core."

"Where I come from in Queensland our language is basically gone but to see them here, unbelievable and I'm just in awe of the ladies and the men."

One of those ladies is Judy Nixon, who Ms Hayward describes as the heart and backbone of the centre.

Mrs Nixon has been a part of the language centre since its start.

"Most of the work that I do is as a mentor for the younger ladies to do the language work and do programs at the school," she said. "Get them prepared to do lessons with the children."

"Do interpreting and translating work for any government departments or whoever wants work done like translating from English to language."

"I made some little story books too. Helped all the other ladies with their language too."

"I speak three or four languages (five with English). I understand a bit of other languages too, you know, just by listening to them. I can't speak it but I understand it."

Mrs Nixon is passionate about ensuring Aboriginal languages are spoken by generations to come.

"I'm here as their mentor and encourage them to keep working on their languages to make us stronger so it can be passed on to the younger ones," she said.

"We don't want to let it die out. We want to keep it strong."

United Nations concern over NT Intervention



The United Nations has written to the Australian Government expressing concern over racist elements of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER).

"This is the slap of realism that this Government desperately needs.

"The international community are crying out against this blatantly racist intervention, which is serving as a major embarrassment for us on a global stage," said Australian Greens Senator Rachel Siewert.

Chairman of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Committee, Fatimata-Binta Victoire Dah, has written to the Government requesting a progress report on Kevin Rudd's promise to reinstate the Racial Discrimination Act.

The letter states: "The committee notes with concern that the Racial Discrimination Act was suspended as a necessity to enact the measures contained in the NTER."

"The Australian Government now has until July 31 to report to the UN on plans to reinstate the Racial Discrimination Act," said senator Siewert.

The five yearly requirement to report on compliance of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is due this week."

"Australia is in clear breach of its obligations under the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racism.

"It is high time the Federal Government acknowledged this and acted immediately to restore racial equality in this country."

The UN was responding to a complaint made by a number of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory who live on prescribed communities.

NSW Aboriginal leader Warren Mundine

described both the complaint and those making it as a "joke"

The complaint detailed eight main areas of discrimination:

(a) threatens Aboriginal cultural and social norms and traditional collective ownership of land;

(b) undermines traditional authority and prevents traditional owners from fulfilling cultural obligations;

(c) undermines Aboriginal governance and decision making in relation to Aboriginal communities, assets and property and places control of Aboriginal communities in the hands of Government employees;

(d) transfers ownership of community housing to the Australian government;

(e) removes consideration of Aboriginal customary law and cultural practice in bail and sentencing in the Northern Territory;

(f) restricts the right to social security on the basis of race;

(g) removes rights of review available to other citizens; and

(h) imposes severe hardship on the most vulnerable in the Australian community.

It said that the "Northern Territory Intervention on the basis of racial discrimination has led Aboriginal people to perceive that it is acceptable and appropriate to discriminate against Aboriginal people from the Northern Territory and that they are less worthy of legislative protections afforded to other Australians."