



## Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

9<sup>th</sup> Session Palais de nation, Geneva, 11-15 July, 2016

---

### **Study and advice on the right to health and Indigenous peoples, with a focus on children and youth** *Expert Study on the Right to Health*

INTERVENTION by Moonfish Dance Company and East Arnhem Regional Council, delivered by Ineke Wallis, representing the Yolngu Peoples

---

Thank you Mister Chairman

Thank you for giving me the floor. I would like to show my respects to the custodian of this land, the chair, vice chair, expert mechanism members, special rapporteur and all indigenous people attending the this session.

Yo manymak, markupmi Mala Duwal nuda lukama numangu.

Yo my beloved people I am going to tell you a story. It is about youth, housing, health, treaty, sovereignty, suicide, education, employment.

I want to share a personal story. I am the only daughter of my Mother Rachael Wallis. I am the only know blood member to my mum, which is very sad and hard for us. The feeling of not knowing where you come from or who you are really hurts. My Mum has no knowledge of her blood line since the 1900's when she was taken away by the Australian Government. Although we have been adopted in to the Yolngu culture and love and respect, it hurts not to know who our blood family is.

Taken from her mother at birth, she was lucky to be adopted into an amazing loving caring family, unfortunately many were not. Mum still felt out of place and longs for identity to this day. Most stolen generation peoples were made servants, sent to orphanages or taken to missions. They experienced no love or care; love is something that does not just come, it is taught by family and imbedded within the person.

Families were split and people wonder why our people can sometimes be aggressive.

Before colonisation, Indigenous Australians lived in peace and happiness. If someone made a mistake, our traditional lore dealt with that person and they will be speared in the leg. That is a lesson, no need for war!

The Australian government said sorry in 2007, which we are grateful for. Although I have not seen much change, and the time has come for the government to try another approach and initiate meaningful discussions with traditional owners of our land. We need a different approach, one based on a true partnership with Indigenous Australians.

In our community, we have truancy officers who pick up kids from their houses and take them to school. While it is a great idea, we are not at that stage yet. Before this will work, our people need safety; this means a safe home to live, a secure job, strong family around them, good health and wellbeing. When this is achieved our people will flourish and their relationships with each other, their communities and with Government will also improve.

We need our kids to not be hungry, tired and living in overcrowded houses so that they can learn to their full ability. Bilingual education for indigenous young people is in need so that we can learn both laws, both worlds, and both ways.

The Australian Government will not succeed in closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, without first allocating adequate resources to providing a safe environment for all Indigenous Australians.

Bilingual education for indigenous young people is in need so that we can learn both laws, both worlds, and both ways.

Our youth would like to see partnership between Australian government and Indigenous Australian traditional owners, because we are lost; we don't know who to listen to or what to do because there is a conflict between our cultures.

Australia is a first world nation, but my people, the Indigenous peoples of Australia experience third world poverty and disadvantage. There is too much suicide of young Indigenous Australians and our people are hurting.

**I respectfully makes the following recommendations to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:**

- I urge the Expert Mechanism to encourage all states to **allocate public funds to provide safe homes** so that all Indigenous children and young people can grow strong and healthy, be educated and get good jobs.
- I urge the Expert Mechanism to encourage all states to **adequately resource and fund quality community controlled services across housing, early childhood, health, family support, and youth sectors**, recognising the inter-relationships between health and social determinants.

- I urge the Expert Mechanism to encourage all states to **establish mechanisms to monitor and ensure the implementation of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its recommendations at the state level, through national action plans** based on consultation with Indigenous peoples based on free, prior and informed consent.
- I urge the Expert Mechanism to encourage all states to **better collaborate with Indigenous representative bodies through best practice, comprehensive and meaningful consultation, and to ensure that culturally appropriate policies based upon free, prior and informed consent** are developed and implemented which recognise all social and cultural determinants of health in achieving the principles of the Declaration.

