

MONTH IN REVIEW

06.01 Australia's first Indigenous political party, the First Nations Political Party, was officially registered with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) today. The party, which has an estimated 2500 members, plans to contest the next federal and Northern Territory elections. The organiser of the party, Japarta Ryan, is the grandson of the early land rights activist Vincent Lingiari and ran as an independent in the seat of Lingiari (NT) at the 2007 and 2010 federal elections.

08. 01 A disabled 51-year-old Aboriginal man died in custody early this morning in the Kalgoorie Watch House, WA. The man, an amputee with a missing arm and toes, was arrested and detained by police last night for breaching a move-on order. Police officers called for an ambulance after realising the man was unwell, but paramedics pronounced the man dead upon their arrival. The police have stated that a full investigation by the WA Police Internal Affairs Unit is underway.

10. 01 The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority lost its Supreme Court appeal against the \$500 fine imposed on S&R Building and Constructions for building a drop toilet on an Aboriginal sacred site in the Gulf of Carpentaria community of Numbulwar. Among the grounds of appeal, the sentencing magistrate failed to give sufficient weight to the shame and emotional distress inflicted upon the site's traditional custodians. Justice Southwood emphasised that, under s 91 of the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007* (Cth), a sentencing court cannot take into account any form of customary law or cultural practice as a reason for aggravating the seriousness of criminal behaviour.

14 .01 In a decision handed down in the Environment Resources and Development Court of South Australia today, companies Straits Resources and Argonaut Resources were denied rights to commence mining operations on land surrounding Lake Torrens, SA. Justice Tilmouth acknowledged the native title rights of the Kokatha people and asserted that their genuine and longstanding opposition to the mining activities weighed against approval. .

19. 01 Three years after the Indigenous elder Mr Ward died from heatstroke in the back of a prison van travelling from Laverton to Kalgoorie, WA government workplace safety agency Worksafe has laid charges under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* (WA) against the four parties found responsible.

26. 01 In an article published in *The Australian* today, Noel Pearson declared that Indigenous Australians should be given the first vote to decide whether a referendum on the constitutional recognition of Indigenous people should be put to the broader Australian public.

27. 01 Australia's human rights record was reviewed before the Human Rights Council today as part of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process. Phil Lynch from Melbourne's Human Rights Law Resource Centre told the ABC that many countries were concerned with the absence of a treaty with Indigenous people in Australia, Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage and the exclusion of Indigenous people from decision-making and power structures.

31. 01 The Federal Government announced that it will commit \$5.6 million to help Aboriginal health organisations achieve accreditation under Australian quality standards. The

Minister for Indigenous Health Warren Snowdon said that the funds would enable more Indigenous people to have access to best-practice health care.

01. 02 The Federal Government announced that it will take up to six months to respond to the 145 recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Council in last week's periodic review of Australia's human rights performance. Among the recommendations were that Australia entrench the rights of Indigenous peoples in the *Constitution*, and review the procedures and the laws applying to the Northern Territory Intervention to ensure compliance with Australia's human rights obligations.

07.02 The Northern Territory National Emergency Response came under renewed critique today, with a group of prominent Australians calling for urgent changes to the Intervention at a meeting of NT Indigenous elders in Melbourne. The non-partisan group launched a statement asserting that the Intervention entrenches racial discrimination and has been implemented without proper consultation with Aboriginal people. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser asserted that the Intervention was paternalistic and demeaning to Aboriginal people, particularly in its policies of income management.

09. 02 Prime Minister Julia Gillard gave the annual update on the Government's progress in closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy today, tabling the *Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2011*. Ms Gillard called on Indigenous people to improve their own lives by taking greater personal responsibility.

15. 02 A multi-million-dollar class action suit has been commenced against the State of NSW by a group of 15 Aboriginal people who suffered sexual abuse by their carers at the state-funded foster home Bethcar in the 1970s and 80s.