

response when I heard about this was to send an email to Marion saying ‘Thank God someone has the courage to stand up to these bully boys.’

Ms Fisher continued “This intervention is characterised by poor planning, poor communication a disturbing lack of transparency. This lack of transparency is an issue for all Australians.”

Aboriginal women are not alone in their condemnation. Elder Harry Jakamarra Nelson also condemned the intervention and the various measures involved, including seizing control of communities for five years. He said that the Warlpiri desert people are angry.

“This intervention has hit us like a ton of bricks,” says. “There’s been no consultation with us ... We don’t know what is expected of us and we really believe that our future is under threat.”

Mr Nelson chaired a meeting of Warlpiri elders who issued a statement attacking the Federal Government’s intervention in 73 remote Northern Territory communities. Their statement said the Warlpiri strongly supported action to tackle child abuse. But the statement said “We are worried with the lack of respect the Federal Government has shown us as the first Australians. We are not satisfied with the communication and information from the Federal Government to our communities.”

The elders spoke of their anger at the decision to quarantine half people’s welfare payments, which must be spent on food and other essentials in a designated shop. They also spoke of their opposition to the abolition of the permit system.

According to the Age, Yuendumu elders were furious when they learnt the Government was taking over culturally sensitive areas — including a men’s ceremonial area and the cemetery. One of the elders, Ned Hargraves, said Centrelink’s quarantining of the money in the half-dozen communities where it had been introduced had only caused problems.

Mr Nelson, president of the Yuendumu Community Council, said a government-appointed business manager, who lives in the community, had not made clear what he wanted from the elders. “Is he a watchdog here to inform Canberra what we are up to? I don’t know,” Mr Nelson said. “He has not spoken to us as a community.”

Mr Nelson said Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough had never visited the community, one of central Australia’s largest.

We acknowledge the sources for this article: The press release from the Women for Wik and The Age 24 October 2007

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/desert-elders-lash-out-at-intervention/2007/10/24/1192941153102.html>

## HEALTH: Child mortality ‘at record low’

Fewer children under the age of five are dying thanks to immunisation programmes and anti-malaria measures, according to the UN children’s agency, UNICEF. Worldwide, the number of young children who died in 2006 dropped below 10 million for the first time, it said. The UNICEF figures are based on government-conducted surveys in more than 50 countries in 2005 and 2006.

Measles vaccinations, mosquito nets and increased rates of breast-feeding were said to have contributed to the fall. However, experts said most of the deaths were preventable and that more needed to be done.

UNICEF said 9.7 million children under five died in 2006, down from almost 13 million in 1990.

The decline was particularly marked in Morocco, Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, where the number of children dying dropped by a third, UNICEF said.

The Latin American and Caribbean region is on course to achieve the millennium development goal of reducing child mortality by two-thirds by 2015 - it registered 27 deaths on average for every 1,000 live births in 2006, compared with 55 in 1990.

The majority of deaths occurred in sub-Saharan Africa (4.8 million) and south Asia (3.1 million). Rates were highest in west and central Africa, where HIV and Aids are prevalent. In sub-Saharan Africa, deaths from measles have been reduced by 75 per cent due to increased vaccination coverage.

In Vietnam, child mortality dropped by about 40 per cent after 30,000 people were trained as health workers and paid to treat people in their own villages, UNICEF said.

### Mortality rates facts

Worldwide: 72 per 1,000 live births  
Developed world: 6  
China: 24  
India: 74  
Latin America and Caribbean: 27  
West and central Africa: 186  
Source: UNICEF