

“KARRINJARLA MUWAJARRI”: WE ARE CALLING FOR AN INDEFINITE POLICE CEASEFIRE

Yuendumu Community Statement of Demands

May 2022

We are senior Elders, families and community members from the Warlpiri Nation. There has been a lot of attention on our community of Yuendumu since NT Police Constable Zachary Rolfe shot and killed our loved one, Kumanjayi Walker, on 9 November 2019. We are grieving this injustice, and the injustice of Rolfe’s acquittal. Above all, we remember that **Yapakurlangu Warnkaru Matters**, Black Lives Matter.

April 2022 marked thirty-five years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was launched. Since its recommendations were delivered in 1991, they have been largely ignored and over 500 First Nations peoples have died in custody across this country. Not one police officer or custodial worker has ever been convicted with any of these deaths. We do not want any more reports or inquiries that are not acted on. We already hold the answers and strategies we need. We do not want any more consultations with governments who do not listen to us. We demand our self-determination, our rightful decision-making authority, and our resources to be restored to us. This is a list of our demands. What we are calling for is **karrinjarla muwajarri**, a police ceasefire. Indefinitely.

Everything that has happened to our community over the past fifteen years has been in the context of the racist NT Intervention. In 2007, the Commonwealth government suspended the Racial Discrimination Act so they could force the Intervention laws on us. Many of these laws were extended by the so-called “Stronger Futures” legislation in 2012. We have suffered compulsory acquisition of township lands, prohibition on consideration of our customary law, attacks on the permit system, loss of our community council, imposition of government managers, widespread unemployment, control of our incomes, increased police numbers and extreme powers that drive police harassment and violence.

With the “Stronger Futures” legislation set to expire in July this year, **we are calling for an end to all discriminatory powers and laws that were introduced with the NT Intervention and a restoration of our community control. Funding for punitive agencies empowered by the Intervention needs to be re-directed into our expert community services** so that our solutions can be designed and implemented from the grassroots up.

NT and Commonwealth governments need to work with and respect the authority of senior decision-makers in our community. We are serious in our demands. These are our calls for justice and for a just future. We call on NT and Commonwealth governments to hear them and act without delay.

Yapakurlangu Warnkaru Matters

Black Lives Matter

The way NT Police have engaged our community is racist, violent and disrespectful of our authority. Our First Nations people have experienced fatal and violent policing ever since colonial invasion, throughout the Frontier Wars all over this country. In 1928, NT Police Constable George Murray shot and killed hundreds of our family members across the central desert during the Coniston Massacre. When our loved one, Kumanjayi was killed in 2019, we felt history was repeating itself. We can never forget what has happened to our people.

WE DEMAND

- 1. No guns in remote communities.** NT Police must immediately be disarmed of weapons in remote communities. This is the only way that there will be a ceasefire.
- 2. NT Police must be defunded at large.** Funds should instead be redirected to community-controlled alternatives, like night patrols and community mediation, that have proven time and time again that we are the best equipped to keep ourselves safe.
- 3. Only Warlpiri governance and authority in our community.** We will not tolerate any further ex-military postings or external police units from elsewhere in the NT or Australia. Only First Nations police liaison officers, Elders and our community should have decision-making powers over policing. This includes being able to evict police who do not cooperate with local community or respect our decision-making authority.

Karrinjarla Muwajarri

The NT Intervention must end

WE DEMAND

- 4. An end to all discriminatory powers and laws that were introduced with the NT Intervention** including special police powers, compulsory income management, prohibition of consideration of customary law and others.
- 5. A restoration of laws and structures that respect our local community-control.** This includes, but isn't limited to, our permit system, tribal council, community housing, and our community health clinic.
- 6. That funding be redirected from punitive agencies to community-controlled services.** All our local Warlpiri organisations require increased funding. We need resources for a properly waged employment program that can allow for self-determined community development that meets local needs. This will allow our people to live a full life in our community and on our lands.
- 7. Kids on Country not in Custody.** Youth detention has grown under the Intervention. The criminalisation of our young people must stop. They are locked up as young as ten years old for minor things and they are abused by the system. We want an end to youth detention. Bring our young people back to community and Country for healing and support programs designed and delivered by us.

Nyampuju Jungarni Yimi

We want the true story to be told

We need the true story about our loved one, Kumanjayi Walker, to be told. The mainstream media in this country is racist. It put our loved one on trial through defamation, racialised stereotyping and blatant lies.

The Channel 7 program in November 2021, for example, was shameless pro-police propaganda. Channel 7 came into our community even though we denied them permission through our local organisations, the Central Land Council and Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri (PAW) Media. The racist report was produced without our consent, it broadcast a video of the shooting of our loved one and it caused our families and communities right across central desert the most serious trauma and distress. We don't want scavenger journalists making media on us without our consent any more.

In the wake of the not guilty verdict in March 2022 many outlets produced very racist reports, particularly Kristin Shorten's articles in *The Australian*. We want to be able to correct the lies they have told. Racist media propels racist violence in the streets and our people suffer. Racism in the media causes our people pain. Media need to be accountable. We don't want anyone talking about our community who know nothing about our community. Where there are racist comments online, media outlets need to make sure that these are not published as a duty of care to our people. All the media knew about our loved one was what was written in police records, not the truth that we know. We want to let our loved one rest. We want the stories of how he was loved for, and cared for, to be shared and known.

8. We need a Black Media Watch to stop the racism in media reporting on our First Nations people.
9. Defamatory content about Kumanjayi Walker must be immediately withdrawn from publication.
10. PAW Media and Elders need to approve any media visits to Yuendumu and any media reporting must be accountable by coming back to our community.
11. Journalists need to work using a cultural safety framework, local protocols and trauma-informed processes. They must listen to and act upon the cultural guidance of our community.

Wajampa-juku-nalu

We are still in sorrow

We are still hurting and grieving. We carry intergenerational trauma and pain. Colonisation doesn't stop. We need support to heal our trauma.

12. We want culturally safe mental health support for community members with trauma and PTSD. This support must be for the longer term and address our shared and individual PTSD.

Parumpurru

We want an end to racism in the court system

The colonial court system has failed us. It has not given us justice. Its processes have caused us harm and created more injustice.

WE DEMAND

- 13. An end to racism in NT courts.** There must be no more all-white juries. Customary law must be considered in all court processes and in the application of colonial law.
- 14. A retrial for Zachary Rolfe in Mparntwe Alice Springs.** We did not see a just or fair trial. We did not see all relevant evidence brought before the court. We saw a jury with no Aboriginal person on it. There was no consideration of our cultural needs or our customary law. The trial should have taken place in Mparntwe Alice Springs, not 1500 km away. We were unheard and disrespected. Rolfe must be held accountable for shooting our loved one, Kumanjayi Walker, and we demand a re-trial.
- 15. An Independent investigation** into all aspects of undue court process in the case of Zachary Rolfe: including the granting of bail, the jury selection, the conduct of judges, the dismissal of jurors and other aspects of the trial process.
- 16.** We want Rolfe to face our customary law at Yuendumu.

Warrmarla Unite

We are calling for a National Day of Action 18 June 2022

When Kumanjayi was first shot, we moved immediately to organise protests. We built connections with the Black Lives Matter movement across this continent and in the USA. We want to reignite this movement. We know there are strong First Nations families and communities, and many Black and Indigenous communities across the world who face the same struggles as we do. June this year will mark fifteen years since the NT Intervention began, laying the destructive path that led to the tragic shooting on our lands. 'Stronger Futures' laws are set to expire soon but other Intervention powers will continue and we face a huge fight to regain our rights and rebuild what has been destroyed.

We are calling for a National Day of Action on June 18 to demand justice for Walker, justice for the many deaths of First Nations people in custody, an end to the discriminatory Intervention powers and reassertion of community control.

We want other First Nations families, communities and supporters to join us in protest again, amplify our voices and put forward your own demands for justice. Let's come out in big numbers and build collective power together to force change.