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Careful consideration, not grandstanding is required for a complex issue

The Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) and the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses (CATSIN) are gravely concerned about the Howard Government's military style approach to tackling issues of child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory.

CATSIN chairperson Sally Goold said most Indigenous people and families live healthy productive lives contributing positively to their communities. The tragedy that exists for these disadvantaged Indigenous people is due to factors that could affect any neglected community, Indigenous or otherwise.

"There are good working examples in Australia and internationally of Indigenous communities and governments that have dealt effectively with these serious issues without removing land ownership and with proper involvement of the communities," Ms Goold said, "the Australian government should stop the grandstanding, and start making a lasting difference."

ANF acting federal secretary Ged Kearney said nurses see first hand the tragic consequences of entrenched neglect and abuse and know there is no simplistic approach to protecting children and women. "We have been appealing to the federal government for many years to address serious disadvantage in Indigenous communities" she said.

Ms Kearney said the Australian government should urgently consult with Indigenous health professionals such as CATSIN and local Indigenous communities to develop long term measures to protect children, rebuild communities and improve the health and welfare of all Indigenous people.

The ANF and CATSIN support the statement issued by The Australian Indigenous Doctors Association warning against a response that fails to address the underlying causal factors contributing to the abuse of children in Indigenous communities.

"This is not the kind of issue you can neglect for 11 years and then come up with a plan to intervene without any consideration of workforce planning or social support provision for families affected by abuse and addiction. It is not enough to instigate six monthly health checks without the infrastructure and workforce to follow up on the results of those checks. It is not enough to deploy police and soldiers into communities for six months without first establishing the support structures to help communities heal and move forward." Ms Kearney said.

For further information please go to:

<http://www.anf.org.au> or <http://www.indiginet.com.au/catsin/>

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/statistics/index.html

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