

## ***THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES***

### **DR MARCUS WATERS**

After 13 years of representing the most vulnerable Aboriginal communities in Australia the *National Indigenous Times* is under the threat from a hostile takeover.

In an article that appeared in *The Australian* newspaper on February 13 2015 written by WA chief reporter Andrew Burrell the situation was summed up best in the following statement:

“... a battle that highlights the ideological divide in indigenous Australia”

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/push-for-national-indigenous-times/story-fn9hm1pm-1227217789989>

The syndicate wanting to take ownership of the paper includes Marcia Langton, former Kimberley Land Council chief Wayne Bergmann, and West Australian Indigenous businessman Clinton Wolf all of whom have interests in mining.

Over the 13 years that the *National Indigenous Times* has been running it has never received any government funding and survives through subscriptions and advertising.

It has always been profitable only unable to cope with a SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) litigation suit launched as a defamation case by former Fortescue Metals Group executive Michael Gallagher.

<http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/cms/page.asp?ID=943>

Towards the end of last year the *National Indigenous Times* was left with no alternative but to enter into voluntary administration after incurring significant legal debts occurring from this litigation.

It follows the closure of *Deadly Vibe Magazine*, the *Tracker* and only yesterday the announcement that NITV has lost its award winning News Show under SBS.

[http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/02/26/indigenous-news-doesnt-rate-nitv-news-axed/?wpmp\\_switcher=mobile](http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/02/26/indigenous-news-doesnt-rate-nitv-news-axed/?wpmp_switcher=mobile)

The loss of the *National Indigenous Times* as a voice and champion for the rights of First Peoples is a massive blow to freedom of speech and the rights of Aboriginal Australians in this country.

This has become a case of David vs Goliath as Aboriginal people around the country, some from the poorest communities in the Australia have rallied and raised money via a public float that was able to match the bid made by the syndicate.

Andrew Burrell said it himself in *The Australian*, “It is understood the syndicate led by Professor Langton would use the paper to champion Aboriginal economic empowerment by promoting Aboriginal employment and jobs.”

This is not what the community wants - the *National Indigenous Times* has won several awards for its reporting on issues of social justice and representing the devastating effects of concurrent policies applied to Aboriginal communities.

The paper has won a Walkley award and last year three current journalists were all awarded Australian Multicultural and Indigenous Media Awards for their contributions to the Aboriginal community.

It was the *National Indigenous Times*, which raised the issues of self-harm, incarceration and suicide in Aboriginal communities long before they became national concerns. It was the *National Indigenous Times* that covered the death in custody of Ms Dhu arrested and held for three days in

a police cell over an unpaid fine in Western Australia ... before dying with broken ribs and blood-filled lungs.

It was the *National Indigenous Times* that raised the alarm about the consequences of the West Australian government closing down more than 100 remote and primarily Indigenous communities.

The *National Indigenous Times* cannot afford to become lost to the Australian national commentary and consciousness. Members of the Aboriginal community have independently raised the capital to match the bid by the syndicate but more is to be done to save the paper.

To find out what you can do to help please call or e-mail:

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