

AUSTRALIA

Stop forced closures

Aboriginal people in Western Australia are leading a movement to protect their remote homeland communities. Over 100 are threatened with closure, deemed 'unviable' by state governments keen to slash costly services, such as electricity.

One of the groups heading up the campaign is Stop the Forced Closure of Aboriginal Communities in Australia, also known as SOS Blak Australia (many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists prefer the spelling 'blak'.)

Led by women from the Kimberly region, rallies took place across Australia in March after Prime Minister Tony Abbott said the government could not 'endlessly subsidize lifestyle choices' of remote communities. In May, tens of thousands demonstrated across the country, as well as in Canada, Britain and New Zealand, Aotearoa.

'It's become about much more than community closures,' says Mitch Torres of SOS Blak Australia. 'It's about children being taken away, the stolen generation being continued, the high incarceration rates of blak men.'

Aboriginal communities do better, in every way, when they remain on their homelands, according to research by Amnesty Australia. Torres insists that the way forward is 'to find holistic solutions that make communities successful and thriving, safe for children and families.' ■

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