



# Quarterly Essay 30 Last Drinks: The Impact of the Northern Territory Intervention

*Paul Toohey*

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When Mal Brough and John Howard announced the Northern Territory intervention in mid-2007, they proclaimed a child abuse emergency. In this riveting piece of reportage and analysis, Paul Toohey unpicks the rhetoric of emergency and tracks progress. One year on, have children been saved? Will Labor continue with the intervention? What are the reasons for the social crisis - the neglect and the violence - and how might things be different?

Toohey argues that the real issue is not sexual abuse, but rather a more general neglect of children. He criticises the way both white courts and black law have viewed violent crime by Aboriginal men. He examines the permit system and the quarantining of welfare money and argues that due to Labor's changes to these, the intervention is now effectively over - though the crisis persists. In *Last Drinks*, Paul Toohey offers the definitive account of how the Territory intervention came about and what it has achieved.

‘What if the greatest threat to a home came not from outside its walls but from within? Such was the charge levelled against Aborigines on 21 June 2007, the day the intervention was announced.’ —Paul Toohey, *Last Drinks*

Paul Toohey is chief northern correspondent for the Australian. He won a Walkley Award for his first Quarterly Essay, *Last Drinks: The Impact of the Northern Territory Intervention*. He was previously a senior writer at the *Bulletin* and is the author of three books: *God's Little Acre*, *Rocky Goes West* and *The Killer Within*. He has won the Graham Perkin journalist of the year award and a Walkley award for magazine feature writing. He lives in Darwin.

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