

NEW FILM ON THE N.T. INTERVENTION
by Margaret Smith, Koori Mail

Award winning filmmaker and television journalist, Julie Nimmo, has just spent a year documenting events for her film "N.T. Intervention" ..

She told the Koori Mail that she made up her mind incredibly fast to do the film. "When the story broke on a Thursday and the weekend papers covered it, by Monday I'd decided I had to do something on the story and rang the ABC's Commissioning Editor David Jowsey". After more negotiations, they agreed to a one hour documentary.

Julie Nimmo has previously made films for SBS and for the ABC and worked in their "Message Stick" unit. Her Walkley Award was for a film she made about street kids in Redfern in 2002 entitled "No Fixed Address". Her most recent films for SBS television were "Pioneers of Love" about an Aboriginal/Russian family's life from first contact to the present day, and "Songlines to the Seine" about Indigenous artists' exhibition in a prestigious Paris Musuem last year.

Her new documentary needed a long term commitment, because Julie Nimmo "wanted to watch a story like this unfold, and spill itself through to a conclusion". Initially this meant journeying to the N.T. and finding the right Aboriginal community to film, "and a group of people who were willing to participate for the needs of television".

Katharine became the place and she had marvellous co-operation from the people there.

The next hurdle was to make sure her filming started ahead of the Intervention Survey Team and its arrival there. "We wanted to nestle into the community when they arrived. The camera's position in the film is generally from the inside. My brief to everyone was that my camera is here to witness what's going on, not effect it," said Julie Nimmo.

To ensure that the camera had complete access she contacted the then Minister Mal Brough's office and got clearance to film their team. "I had to have all the stakeholders in agreement. If I was going to be blocked out, the film would have suffered", she added.

The process was incredibly rewarding for the filmmakers and for the community. Julie Nimmo says she saw a great deal of resilience and dignity. "I just came away with such admiration for the people who live in the Northern Territory."

The filmmaker is originally from Sydney so they weren't people she knew culturally. The process of filming also gave her great insight into their stoicism and she learnt a lot about 'remote' Aboriginal Australia.

Julie Nimmo is passionate about the need for Australia to understand that Indigenous people are as diverse as any other group. "Aboriginal people are cast as this mass, almost without humanity, so abuse of children is seen as spread out to all communities. If that was true I should have seen pedophiles and neglectful mothers but I didn't. Mainstream Australia has a generalised picture of these people which is harmful", she says.

Indigenous Australians need to be seen as individuals, and as families with children, parents and grandparents, and this is another message of her film and for the government.

"In the N.T. you don't get to follow your own path because of the Intervention. This was a big problem in the early days and still is. I hope my film illustrates their story as individuals and as people. This is the best thing I've ever done - it's closest to my heart", she says finally.