

## **FOREWORD**

For over three decades, Professor Jon Altman has been one of the leading scholars on Indigenous research with a particular focus on Indigenous economies.

Through the period since the Northern Territory intervention in 2007 until the present day, his work has taken on increasing significance. In a period in which government policy continues to be shaped by ideological rather than by evidence and research, Jon Altman, like many other researchers in the field, found his expertise and work increasingly sidelined. As the thread of polemic that weaves through these articles shows, Altman's insights, founded in his research and his experience within the very communities affected, has provided sound critique of the assumptions, impacts and unintended consequences of government dogmatism. His work has been ignored to the detriment of the people who have been subject to these policies.

Professor Altman has argued that the rhetoric of government, its insincere and disingenuous processes of consultation, and the consensus between the two major political parties and the conservative political press has become the dominant, unquestioned line. But underneath that ideological consensus are approaches that ignore the failures on the ground that Altman reveals and documents.

The title of this collection of essays is no accident. In the current climate, researchers such as Altman are not posing questions but defending research outcomes. Policy makers are not responding to what is working and what isn't; they are ignoring any work that questions the ideological agenda of current government direction.

To the many of us who have followed Altman's career and body of work, it is of no surprise that his predictions about the current state of Indigenous policy in Australia consistently prove to be correct. He brings considerable expertise, experience and intuition to all his deliberations and views.

Two quotes from two great men came to mind in reading this collection of essays and reflection pieces: George Orwell: "In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act" and Martin Luther King Jr.: "In the end, we remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends."

Altman, in the best sense of academic tradition, has been a fearless and unwavering observer and commentator, unwavering and unrelenting in his intellectual and humane approach. In the poisonous atmosphere in which critics of government policy – just as insidious from the Labor government as it is

from the ultra-conservatives – have been silenced, Altman has been a forthright, honest and diligent commentator.

We are proud to be publishing this collection of critically important essays. We are confident that, over the passage of time, they will only increase in importance.

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