

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples present today. I also acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Thank you for coming today to commemorate the life of my beloved wife – Sabine Kacha. As most of you know Sabine from her time in Australia, I would like to focus on the time before her arrival in Australia.

Sabine was born on 25 August 1966 in Germany. Her parents were Monika and Dietrich Kacha, and she was the only child. In her early years – before she went to school – she expressed the wish to learn English. When she obtained her driving licence she drove with her mother in a car to England. After finishing school she found soon an opportunity to work for one year in New York. After that year ended, she returned to Germany. The work visa she had for the USA had a restriction that wouldn't allow her to return to the USA for several years. In 1994 the restriction ended, and she went to New York again and found a job at the United Nations. The United Nations provide their employees language courses for the six official languages of the UN. Sabine completed the language training in four of these languages – English, French, Russian and Spanish. She didn't just learn the languages, she also immersed her self in the culture related to the language. She took at the UN advanced language classes like conversation or movie classes. She loved especially the Russian language and culture. In New York there is an area called “Little Russia by the sea”. This is an area where English is a foreign language, you basically need to speak Russian to get along. She loved being there, going to restaurants and shops, buying books and DVD. If she would have stayed longer in New York, she would have started to learn the remaining two languages, Arabic and Chinese. But her live took another turn.

In 2003 I got in touch with Sabine via a dating site in the Internet. When I first contacted her, I was under the impression to talk to somebody living about 30min away from the place where I lived in Germany. It soon turned out that this was the house of her parents, while she was living in New York. Anyhow, the relationship continued. Sabine had plans to return to Germany, and I was hoping that this would happen soon. Those of you who have met Sabine in person might know that she had an enormous convincing power. So she convinced me to come to New York – for one year only. In August 2003 during one of my visits in New York we agreed to marry. In the USA the first step to get married is to obtain a marriage licence. So we made the plan to obtain a marriage licence now, and to marry during my next visit to New York. After we got the marriage licence, Sabine read through the fine print and found out that the marriage licence would have been expired before my next visit. So we decided to get married a few days later. Two of Sabine's friends were witnesses, and in the evening we celebrated with some of her friends in a restaurant. I would like to add that this was the first **and** the last time I allowed Sabine to organise anything of importance by herself. We had plans to have a “real” wedding with white dress, church and so on when we returned to Germany – but this never happened.

In 2004 I moved to New York. New York is a great place to visit – but for me not a good place to live in. There was no way to get Sabine back to Germany – or to anywhere else. Except to Australia. When Sabine was in her teenage year she loved to travel. During one of her travels a friend mentioned that she planned to travel to Australia next year. Sabine didn't like to travel by herself, so she decided to go with her friend. As preparation for this trip she went to the local library and borrowed books about Australia. One of the books stated that all aboriginal people in Tasmania had been extinguished. As you all know, this is not correct, but it was stated in the books of that time. This made Sabine upset and angry, and she decided to go to Australia and help the first nations people. She travelled several times to Australia, but as a tourist she couldn't achieve anything. She tried to get a working visa – but for that she would need to be either an IT specialist or a nurse. Both occupations were not suitable for her. Eventually she gave up on her dream to come to Australia and

also stopped her travels to Australia as this was using up all her available money and she didn't achieve anything. When I learned about her dreams to come to Australia I started to research the options. The immigration system to Australia was and is very complex, and keeps changing. It took a couple of years – until 2007 – to finally get a visa.

In May 2008 we arrived in Australia to stay. We had one of the early flights that arrived around 6am at the airport. When we arrived at our Hotel the rooms were not ready, so we put our luggage into the luggage room of the hotel. Now imagine the situation: We arrived in a foreign country to start a new life. All our possessions were in a luggage room in the hotel, we were totally tired from the trip and had to wait for a couple of hours before we could get into the hotel room. So what should we do? Sabine's answer to that was typical for her. We rushed to Walsh Bay, where the Sydney's Writer festival was held, and attended as many indigenous sessions as possible. The next days and weeks the same – we attended as many indigenous events as possible. Eventually I had to slow her down – we also needed to look for a place to stay, register with Medicare, open a bank account and so on.

Sabine's biggest and most favourite topic was the NT Intervention. The NT Intervention started in 2007 and brought a variety of sometimes draconian measures – pretending to protect women and children. Initially I had big problems to understand the Intervention. It should provide protection for women and children – but none of the measures was directly helping them. Then I heard that the Intervention was good because more police stations were built. It still didn't make sense to me: A part of the NT Intervention was the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act – a piece of law that protects against discrimination. Why do you need to suspend this act to build a police station? I also noted that the government used very flimsy evidence – something that would be impossible in Germany. For example, Jenny Macklin, at that time Minister for Indigenous affairs, made a claim that the people in the NT would buy more fresh food and vegetables as result of one of the measures related to the NT Intervention, the income quarantining. Experts who were investigating that claim described this as using evidence that “would all sit towards the bottom of an evidence hierarchy”, or even as “fraught methodology”. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, James Anaya, stated evidence of success of the income quarantining “is ambiguous at best”. It was a time where the government came up with one reason after the other why the Intervention was a success. None of these reasons lasted long, because there was no evidence to support these claims of success. Eventually the Government admitted that the NT Intervention was a failure. But no problem – they had already a new legislation ready. This new legislation was essentially the same as the old legislation, continuing all but one measure of the NT Intervention with minor modifications. But – most importantly – the measures got a new shiny name: Stronger futures. Now imagine the situation: There is a package of measures which has proven to be a failure. This package is now with minor modifications applied again under a new name. How should this work? If you look at the history of the treatment of the first nations people since the start of the Colonisation you find this pattern again and again. Something fails, is tried again. It fails, is tried again and so on. As most measures in the area of indigenous policy failed and keep failing, there was and still is a widespread belief that the first nations people are an unsolvable problem. Please don't believe that – the problem is with the people who apply failed policies again and again and again. To quote Albert Einstein: “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results”.

A few months ago – on 17 July 2022 – the Stronger Future Legislation, i.e. the laws which continued the original NT Intervention – ended. Some people might believe that this was the end of the NT Intervention. No, it is not. By now many of the measures of the NT Intervention have been switched over to different legislations and continue. The overall attitude and way of treating first nations peoples has not changed. So while the laws of the NT Intervention have ended, the spirit is still alive and the fight must go on. In this regard I would like to draw your attention to this booklet produced by IRAG, the Intervention Rollback Action Group in Alice Springs. Some copies are

available outside.

Looking back at the events I noticed two things which might be just accidental coincidences - or not. The first thing is the timing of the NT Intervention. We got our visa for Australia in 2007 – shortly after the NT Intervention was announced. And Sabine passed away shortly after NT Intervention laws formally ended.

The second thing is the fight against the NT Intervention – for a long time Sabine was basically the only person keeping the fight against the NT Intervention alive. Recently IRAG – the Intervention Rollback Action Group in Alice Springs found the energy to join the fight against the NT Intervention again – just in time to take over. So that the fight against the NT Intervention can continue.

For those of you who knew Sabine only from her time in Australia it is hard to believe: When I got in touch with her in New York she was a very shy person, very reluctant to talk to people. New York was a great place for her to be – but it didn't allow her to unfold her potential. As soon as we arrived in Australia she started to change, to unfold her full potential and unbelievable energy. So her time in Australia was the fulfilment of her dreams.

Thank you.