

31 January, 2011

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ACT

Re: The Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011

I wish to make a submission to the Committee to express my opposition to the proposed Stronger Futures legislation.

I concur with the concerns expressed by community groups and national organisations, that the legislation does not reflect the views expressed by communities during the Stronger Futures consultations, and that it will further embed the disempowerment and discrimination that was begun under the Northern Territory Intervention.

In particular, please note the following grounds for my opposition to the proposed legislation:

1. The proposed legislation, rather than providing support and encouragement, focuses predominantly on punitive regulatory approaches such as cuts to family support payments, for example, when children don't attend school.
2. This blanket approach has failed to acknowledge the cultural strengths within the majority of communities. The NTER has been an exercise aimed at changing the behavior of Aboriginal people, which has proven to be damaging and unsuccessful as shown by the Government's own *Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Monitoring Report January – June 2011*
3. The proposed legislation is a further step towards total disempowerment. Decisions about every aspect of life are being taken over, formulated and implemented through the various arms of government. By undermining peoples' capacity to be actively engaged in initiating and planning the future direction of their lives, they are denied a normal healthy existence and the current disillusionment, depression and despair will only increase. According to Government statistics the incidence of suicide and self-harm in the NT have increased since the introduction of the Intervention in 2007.

I ask that the legislation be withdrawn and that an alternative policy is developed, based on genuine consultation, community empowerment, the respect of Aboriginal culture, lands and languages, and the fundamental right of Aboriginal people to be able to control their own lives.

Thank you.

Jamie Edgerton
Member, Mornington Inter Church Aboriginal Awareness Committee