



To the Senate Inquiry for the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory
Bill

And Social Security Legislation Amendment Bill 2011

Contact details for this submission

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In Yuendumu we Warlpiri people have never agreed with this Bill. We don't agree that parents should lose their Centrelink payments if their children don't go to school every day. The N.T. government is also going to give them fines. Where are they going to get that money? We don't agree with forcing our children to school when we have lost our Two Way, or Bilingual Programs. This is just another way of taking our children away, from our language, our knowledge and us Warlpiri parents and grandparents. This Stronger Futures means no future for us as Warlpiri people.

In our Warlpiri schools in Yuendumu, Willowra, Lajamanu and Nyirripi we had bilingual programs. In Yuendumu we started in 1974 and everyone was happy for their children to learn in our own language and to learn to read and write in Warlpiri. It was easy for all the little children to start in Warlpiri and as they went up through the grades they learnt more and more English easily. Everyone in this community who went through the bilingual program speaks English quite well.

Both languages are really important but we really want our children to keep up their Warlpiri language and learn to read in Warlpiri first.

There are lots of words, grammar and knowledge in the Warlpiri books that we want them to learn in Warlpiri first. Otherwise English starts to take over in their minds. We have so much Warlpiri knowledge about our country, all the plants, animals, water soakages, and our dreamings which we need to pass on to our children. When they learn mainly in English their Warlpiri gets weak and they don't understand older people talking. It makes us sad and it makes them sad and lost.

The people making the laws, taking over our communities, don't know anything about us Warlpiri people. They think the best thing is to change our communities into towns for White people and change our children into English speaking children. We have already changed a lot, from living in humpies to houses, from men having two or three wives to one wife. We have no more forced promised marriages, and much less violence at sorry time. But we want to hold on to our language and important things in our culture. We were getting on alright changing slowly and keeping our language and knowledge strong.

If we had our bilingual program properly supported as it was up to about ten years ago, then we would want our children to go to school every day. But now with mostly English in the school we don't want to see our children mixing up English and Warlpiri like we see it in other places. Parents can't stop children talking mixed language to each other when they are playing away from home or in the school playground.

It's hard for children to keep strong Warlpiri when they learn new things in English first and they haven't learned those words in Warlpiri. When we had our bilingual program children could learn the Warlpiri

to talk about everything in school from their teachers. Now we see some young children struggling to talk Warlpiri, not even talking proper English. Sometimes we don't understand what they are trying to say.

We don't think this English program is working well. We don't agree with forcing our children to go to school into a program, which is not working well for English and is not letting them learn to read and write first in our own language.

The Northern Territory is the last place where Aboriginal languages are still strong and spoken by every-one young to old. Our language is so important to us and also for all other Aboriginal people who have lost their language, for them to know and feel proud that there are still strong Aboriginal languages. Even all the non-Aboriginal Australians should recognize that Aboriginal languages and culture are the history and ongoing heritage of this country, which makes Australia different from other English speaking countries.

If the government really wants Aboriginal children to go to school every day and learn well, we recommend that the Commonwealth government should have a policy to support our languages into the future and make a law that there must be bilingual programs in our communities where the children's first language is their Aboriginal language. They should over-ride the N.T. Legislative Assembly as they have done in the past. When they have put strong bilingual programs back into place then we can talk about rewards and punishments for parents to get children coming to school every day.

Names of Yuendumu parents, grandparents and carers who have signed this submission

Minnie Marshall	Eddie Robertson	Steven Brown	Anthony Martin
Aaron Williams	Louise Watson	Valda Granites	Drucilla Spencer
Lawrence Watson	Warren Williams	Courtney Singleton	Andrea Tasman
Thomas Watson	Samara Dickson	Kyra Ross	Grace Butcher
Mathew Brown	Janelle Nelson	Lottie Robertson	Mary Butcher
Kirsty Brown	Doris Jurra	Steven Kelly	Marlette Ross
Nathania Egan	Gweneth Nelson	Harry Nelson	Wilson Walker
Dadu Gorey	Tess Ross	Lynette Granites	Wilma Poulson
Vistaria Brown	Connie Fisher	Elsie Granites	Christopher Poulson
Julie Anne Dickson	Georgina Wilson	Michael Wayne	Antoinette Brown
Norissa Watson	Walter Lechleitner	Ritasha Watson	Tommy Watson
Frankie Watson	Sherman Spencer	Stephanie Nelson	Alma Granites
Lincoln Robertson	Cecily Granites	Simon Fisher	Bessie Simms
	Shaurita Langdon	Larissa Granites	Shanna Nelson
	Cherina Singleton	Janet Spencer	Otto Simms
	Anthony Egan	Beverly Marshall	Sebastian Wilson
	Anna Marie Penhall	Sharaline Dickson	Athena Granites
	Harry Jones	Frank Watson	Narelle Nelson
	Rosalyn Jones	Ritchie Robertson	Reanne Brown
			Casper Marshall