

SUE WILLIAMSON

27 January, 2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
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Dear Secretary,

Re: **Social Security Legislation Amendment Bill 2011**
Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (Consequential & Transitional Provisions) 2011
Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011

I am writing to request the Committee to recommend to the federal government to withdraw the above legislation.

As an individual who is concerned about education, health, culture and language for all people in Australia I believe this legislation is a serious backward step. I also believe that the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory do not want this kind of punitive action and government imposed ideology. Such action is making people more dependent on external authority just as in the old welfare days.

Aboriginal people are asking for quality teachers and more Aboriginal teachers. They see culture and language as important in their children's education. They ask to be listened to. They ask to be respected. They say they are tired of 'outsiders' telling them what to do. They speak of successful community-initiated programs that have been undermined by the NTER. They ask to run their own affairs.

The money that is being wasted on paying bureaucrats to run these programs could be much better spent in providing good health and education resources, excellent teachers, support for locally based and run enterprises and support for culture.

I work with Aboriginal people in regional NSW and I know that no amount of punitive action helps. But what does make a difference is giving people respect, helping them reclaim their culture, their own self respect and starting the healing process from all the violence and hurt of the past. When they see hope for themselves, they want a good future for their children. When they are given culturally appropriate support they begin the journey of becoming whole people who can take positive actions for themselves, their families and their communities.

I call on the government to withdraw its *Stronger Futures* legislation and work in real partnership with key Aboriginal leaders from the Northern Territory, peak organisations, and all the organisations that are delivering services throughout the Northern Territory to the people on the ground, in order to pave a way forward for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Williamson