

## Submission

### Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011 and Two related bills

*The suspension of the Racial Discrimination is an inherent racially discriminating act therefore the methodology used to deliver an 'emergency response' toward Aboriginal people is paternalistic and condescending. Legislation aimed at extending the NT Intervention, on this factor alone, should be withdrawn. It is a means that will never justify the end of continual disadvantage and inequity between non Aboriginal and Aboriginal people.*

*The proposed new legislation should not be adopted because;*

- 1. The NT legislation has been imposed on the majority of Aboriginal people and makes a mockery of the principles of self determination.**
- 2. The proposed legislation is punitive and paternalistic. It does not express an understanding of Aboriginal disadvantage and is doomed to failure in trying to 'Close the Gap' between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people.**

**Punitive approaches such as cuts to welfare for parents or care givers of children for Non School attendance will do nothing to encourage children to learn. Indirect welfare cuts, will only encourage community humbug, alienation between peoples and their communities, and increase lateral violence amongst its members.**

**Appropriate housing, education in life skills, cultural development, re - learning of the art of responsibility, consequences and integrity , healing intergenerational trauma, and insisting on Aboriginal participation in the growth and wealth of their communities will effect change. We need to develop practices that will ensure systemic change in the breaking of cycles of endemic dysfunction in all arenas of the Aboriginal Industry including its 'produce', the lives of Aboriginal people.**

- 3. The legislation fails to embrace the evolving cultural strengths of the Aboriginal people, the building blocks of their communities. Expecting behavioural change in a whole race of people in the NT is naïve and based on values of assimilatory behavior which does not recognized the uniqueness and diversity of Aboriginal people and their cultures.**

**Prohibiting the use of Alcohol, for example, has only exacerbated the problem in the migratory behavior of the addict. The consequences have been the break down of many families and communities by the forced dispossession from place, of people, with a severe problem. The problem not being addressed merely displaced.**

- 4. The enactment of this legislation will further alienate the Aboriginal people of the NT and contribute to a furthering of poor physical and mental health, further substance abuse, violence amongst each other, and premature death.**

**A people who continue to be dealt with through paternalistic modes will not mature and will not grow into healthy and responsible lives unless they are educated in ways to empower themselves in all aspects of living. I challenge the Government to show us concrete examples and research that suggests otherwise since the implementation of the emergency response. My experience on the ground has been that things have only got worse.**

**The NTER law is not required as a response to the dysfunction with the lives of many Aboriginal people and their families. The law of the land should suffice and be implemented on all peoples of Australia. Measures of welfare penalties already exist across all states and territories. These measures should be implemented, including the punitive practices of ceasing welfare payments when a person, individually, has abused the requirements and participation of welfare responsibilities. In many cases this does not occur, particularly in remote communities and this only encourages and reinforces the phenomena of 'sit down money' which only creates the woes of welfare dependency .**

- 5. The legislation does not take into account cost of fresh foods and produce. The costs in many communities is exorbitant. I once paid \$10.38 for a mango, and I can afford it as a luxury, and as a well paid white community worker, who is subsidized by my employer to address the cost of food. Food security is also about education and management of money by and for the people. Research suggests that subsidies and the encouragement of sustainable market gardens assist in the sustainability and access to healthy foods at reasonable prices.**

**Issues surrounding the Basics card have presented issues and limited purchasing power to many Aboriginal people. However, the effects of stigmatization are real amongst Aboriginal people particularly in the larger towns. My general experience has been that within communities many women appreciate its use, particularly as it limits the effects of humbugging and allows for food for families against the pressure of community gambling and humbugging for cash. However the approach to the Basic Card is racist in practice. I have even experienced a white man having to defend on the phone that he wasn't Aboriginal, although the Centrelink personal insisted that he was because he was living in an**

**Aboriginal community. By the way , the postcrip to that incident was that he proved he was a white man and therefore did not have to have his part pension controlled by a Basic Card. Families who are excellent care givers and live healthy, efficient family lives are stereotyped by others who assume Aboriginality means dysfunction. Basic Card measures, if they are to be fair should be imposed on all welfare recipients who behave irresponsibly no matter of race. It should be a measure to protect dysfunctional families, not to stereotype and stigmatize Aboriginal people as a race.**

### **ROYAL COMMISION**

**I call for a Royal Commission into the delivery of services to Aboriginal people, under the NT Intervention, in the hope that its proposed extension, will be halted immediately, until true self determination by Aboriginal People, in all matters of their lives and on their land, be sincerely adopted and realised.**

**The terms of the Royal Commission should cover the following areas.**

- 1. The impact on the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act toward Aboriginal Territorians.**
- 2. The truth about the 'Why' the first Intervention was imposed. The truth about the reasons why Aboriginal people have to continue to endure the humiliation of 'public signage' stereotyping the false assumptions of the nature of Aboriginal people. The truth in the statistics of Aboriginal people who have been arrested and convicted of child abuse, and those convicted for the possession of alcohol and pornography in NT Aboriginal communities.**
- 3. The effectiveness of General Business Managers throughout the Territory and their impact on outcomes in many diverse communities.**

- 4. The Impact of proposed punitive and behaviour modification practices on Aboriginal people as a race.**
- 5. The accountability processes of Government where hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent to address Aboriginal disadvantage and the true impact of tax payers monies on Aboriginal people lives.**
- 6. The processes in addressing complaints by people who attempt to whistle blow about illegal and unethical practises, and the implications of a lack of official and Government response.**
- 7. Systemic and endemic corrupt practices by mostly non Aboriginal people in the delivery of services to Aboriginal People and the lack of Aboriginal participation in work.**
- 8. The Consultative methodologies and their impact on self determination and vision driven outcomes by Aboriginal people.**

**Michael Gravener**

**I have had extensive experience in urban Aboriginal communities in Sydney, NSW and Melbourne, Vic; and Kaltukatjara, Mutijulu and Ali Curung in the NT. I currently reside and work in the community of Wirrimanu in WA on the Tanami track 90kms from the border of NT. All my experiences have been in a senior managerial role.**