

To the Senate Committee Enquiry regarding the Stronger Futures legislation 2011

Our names are Damien Curtis and Sinem Saban.

We are the filmmakers behind a documentary film called *Our Generation*. Since 2007, we have been collecting and disseminating community voices from across the Northern Territory, to share their message with mainstream Australia.

Many issues have come up in our interviews with elders and community leaders.

Of their ongoing struggle to maintain control of their lands and languages, to have their customary law respected, the future of their kids, the breakdown in their communities...

But at the forefront of all of their concerns was the profound hurt and despair caused by the Northern Territory Intervention, which they have been forced to live under for the last 5 years.

And now, despite the Government's promise to work in closer partnership with community leaders in the Northern Territory, to establish a new dialogue for building solutions together... the Government is continuing with more of the same top-down, punitive policies that had attracted so much national and international condemnation under the Intervention.

We are in touch with many communities across the NT, and there is unanimous uproar against this new legislation.

They feel that their voices were not heard in the consultations that the Government carried out. That their opposition to Government control under the Intervention, their need for bilingual education in their schools, and so many other concerns are absent from the proposed legislation.

Sinem Saban in fact attended, and filmed, three of these consultations herself, in Darwin, Maningrida and Yirrkala.

And she was shocked to find out that the Government representatives was taking no formal recording of the proceedings.

How were communities' concerns going to feed into policymaking, if there was no record being kept?

The main elder in our film, Rev. Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra OAM, has repeatedly asked Jenny Macklin to consult more with traditional Aboriginal leaders in the NT. Jenny Macklin seemed to have finally come round, and met personally with Rev. Dr. Gondarra in Darwin last year to better understand his concerns and find a way to work together.

But what evidence is there of respectful dialogue and negotiation here?

Please, listen to the profound and widespread opposition to this piece of legislation, that goes against the concerns and aspirations of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

From Damien Curtis & Sinem Saban, Our Generation, 31 Jan 2012

Please, listen when the senior elders and leaders of the NT speak to you, people like Rev. Dr. Djinyini Gondarra OAM, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM, Harry Nelson, and so many others.

Listen to the legal fraternity, to human rights groups like Amnesty International, to Aboriginal reconciliation groups like ANTaR, to the concerns of civil society across the board.

And hear the cry of the people.

If you would like to know more about our project, please visit:

<http://www.ourgeneration.org.au>

The Australian Lawyers Alliance will be hosting a special Parliamentary screening of the film in Parliament House Theatre, Canberra on Monday 27th February. Followed by panel discussion with Rev. Dr. Djinyini Gondarra OAM, Barbara Shaw, Prof. Jon Altman and Hon Alastair Nicholson AO QC.

With our sincerest regards and hope for a better future,

Damien Curtis & Sinem Saban
Our Generation