

From:
Kris Keogh

To the Senate Community Affairs Committee

Re: Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011

I wish to make a submission to the Committee to express my strong objection to elements of the proposed legislation. I am an Australian who has grown up, and lives in, Arnhem Land. I've worked on many Aboriginal communities and have a real desire to see things improve for Aboriginal people. The last 30 years of indigenous policy have made very little inroad into improvement of living conditions for Aboriginal people in the NT. I feel this Bill only makes things worse.

I would like to specifically comment on 'Part 3—Land Reform' of this Bill, as I believe it will be detrimental to Aboriginal people, rather than helpful.

To see the Federal government proposing to overwrite NT laws that deal with Aboriginal people in town camps is racist and disempowering. Bush people have vastly different cultural, social and economic realities from policy makers in Canberra. This proposed Bill continues to ignore the most fundamental and vital finding of The Little Children Are Sacred Report; that Aboriginal people are best placed to determine the solutions to their current difficulties. Only they have the experience to generate solutions to their unique problems.

I ask that the Stronger Futures Bill be withdrawn and replaced with a plan that is generated by the Aboriginal people affected by the proposed Bill. I also call for all legislation such as this that discriminates and applies different laws to people purely on racial grounds to be scrapped.

I am ashamed that the Labor party, that once worked so hard to rebuild relations with Aboriginal people, is now extending the measures of the Howard intervention; the worst policy failure since the Stolen Generation.

Yours Sincerely,

KRIS KEOGH