

Dear Senators,

I am aware a submission has been made by Concerned Australians. I wish to support those submissions.

I also wish to make an oral presentation in support of my views.

As a former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Fraser Government and the Minister responsible for the passage of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 and the grant of the first Aboriginal Land titles under that legislation. I am particularly concerned at the public policy which underlies the proposed package of Stronger Futures legislation, the regulatory framework the legislation would implement, the authoritarian direction of the legislation which it will impose on the lives of aboriginal people and the communities in which they live, and the punitive sanctions proposed to support the policy and regulation. I am very concerned at the entrenchment of the proposed legislative package by the 10 year sunset provision.

I believe the Stronger Futures legislative package, like the Northern Territory Emergency Response legislation which the package replaces, reverts public policy to the discredited past era of discrimination, paternalism, authoritarianism and ignorance and disrespect for aboriginal history, heritage, culture, language and customary law which predated the Whitlam and Fraser Administrations and ought not to be reintroduced, as is occurring, under the guise of the NTER and it's variant, Stronger Futures.

There is a better way for Governments to work with aboriginal people and their communities, overcome their disadvantages and difficulties, and uplift their standing and personal lives within Australian society than the backward and discriminatory policies and proposals of the Stronger Futures legislative package.

By way of background to the above views, I invite the Committee to read my essay on the 40th anniversary of the successful 1967 Referendum proposal published by the Indigenous Law Centre, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales, in the Australian Indigenous Law Review, 2007, Volume 11, Special Edition.

I look forward to be advised when the Senate Committee will be sitting to hear oral submissions.

Yours Sincerely,

Hon. Ian Viner AO QC.