

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
Parliament House, Canberra ACT

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission Against the so-called "Stronger Futures" Legislation

We oppose the so-called "Stronger Futures" legislation package because we believe that:

1. The package has not rectified the discriminatory and punitive measures included in the original Northern Territory Emergency Response, and therefore to extend these measures for 10 years and into other disadvantaged communities like Bankstown is totally unacceptable;
2. The package is being imposed against the wishes of most who participated in the Stronger Futures "consultations". Genuine consultation would have resulted decisions reflecting the views of the communities;
3. Aboriginal land rights should be strengthened NOT weakened by increasing government control over communities and town camp lands;
4. Self management by communities should have been supported in ways to improve their future well being, NOT by disempowering them by giving government more community control over alcohol management and community stores. Furthermore, community councils should be reinstated;
5. Inappropriate and excessive punishment such as up to 6 months gaol for possessing a bottle of beer, or up to 18 months for a 6 pack is extreme, unfair and ineffective;
6. Removal of social security entitlements from parents and carers of children for missing a few days of school is potentially racist, punitive and ineffective. Not only does this further punish disadvantaged families, but in the case of those who may be forced back to school against their cultural responsibility priorities, because of their boredom, behavioural disorder or disengagement with curriculum inappropriate for Aboriginal learning or because they are fearful of bullying at school, being returned to school against their wishes without addressing the problem, could be damaging to the student him/herself and most likely be disruptive to the whole class and/or school ;
7. Indigenous culture needs to be respected as required by our signing of the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, NOT by having bail and sentencing provisions that do not require customary law to be even taken into consideration, except in very limited circumstances;
8. Income management is degrading, punitive and ineffective in most cases, especially so for remote communities and should be ended in communities which do not want it. To pressure acceptance or to offer short term incentives to accept income management that would otherwise be opposed is not acceptable either.

We ask that the government repeal the NT Emergency Response legislation and withdraw the so-called "Stronger Futures" legislative package, which we believe will NOT strengthen the targeted communities' futures, but will only further damage and humiliate the big majority of them.

Yours sincerely,
Phil Bradley and Annie Nielsen