

Submission regarding “Stronger Futures in the NT” legislation.

I wish to express my strong concerns about the new legislation for a second NT Intervention, euphemistically called “Stronger Futures in the NT”.

The first intervention I consider to be an appalling initiative, humiliating to the Aboriginal people it effected. It ignored their basic human rights, even though it pretended to address these rights. It showed a paternalistic and racist approach. And it destroyed some vital community programs that had been carefully built up and were working.

I believe this second intervention will continue that attitude, and as such will be largely detrimental and yet another step backwards.

Much research and analysis has been done. It seems the government only listens to reports it wants to hear, and shoves those which expose rudimentary flaws under the carpet.

I am referring to the unheeded reports and responses by important notables like: Dr Rev Djiniyini Gondarra, Yananymul Mununggurr, the Ramingining Elders, and many others, as well as its own recent community consultations that demonstrate overwhelming Aboriginal opposition to the Intervention.

Therefore, the Government’s promise to work in partnership with Aboriginal people rings hollow. It goes for the Basics Card (which has been proven seriously destructive), and not as it should for the Basic Rights (which are still not recognised!).

I agree with Amnesty International Australia, when they say that a stronger future in the NT must be a product of the people.
(19 October 2011: "Community consultations are a welcome first step towards tackling Aboriginal disadvantage in the Northern Territory, but any strategies to ensure stronger futures must be community-driven in order to be sustainable").

I also firmly believe in the Aboriginal right to Self Determination.

Both the Intervention and the Stronger Futures policies go against self determination.

And I want to be assured that whatever policy will be legalised, it will protect all cultural and spiritual relationship with the land in all of the Aboriginal communities in question. No land should be taken away, no people should be removed or forced to live away from their cultural homeland.

I call on the Gillard Government, and particularly on the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin, to stop the NT Intervention and design an alternative policy that truly empowers and is fully driven by the Aboriginal communities it is intending to help.

In order to eradicate Aboriginal disadvantage it is high time to listen closely to the Aboriginal communities: “Aboriginal peak bodies, community welfare and public health groups from around the country are calling for a new direction in policies affecting Aboriginal Australians based on cooperation, not ‘intervention’ “. (23 November 2011 by *Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation*)

Yours Sincerely,

Jepke Goudsmit