

Tuesday 31st January 2012

To the Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs

Re: Submission: Stronger Futures in the NT

Dear Committee,

I am concerned that recent policies affecting people in NT Aboriginal communities have been counter-productive. When policy is formulated, consideration must be given to what is being **implied** by the policy, and the impact that this has on the psychology and morale of a community. Most of the policies brought in since John Howard's "Emergency Intervention" have had the effect of demoralizing, disempowering, angering and insulting people who had been working hard in their communities. In my opinion, these are some of the reasons people turn to grog, the frequent consequences of which (violence, abuse, premature death, incarceration) are supposedly what the policy-makers are claiming to address.

Prior to these disempowering policies, there were local initiatives in Aboriginal communities that were very successful (eg; the Mt. Theo Substance Misuse Program in Yuendumu). Policy makers should look at what works in communities (local initiatives which develop through local knowledge and relationships as equal partnerships) and support these (rather than undermine them) and use them as models to apply **appropriately** in other communities. Extra layers of bureaucracy and policy which in effect, offends, is counter-productive.

Thank you for your consideration.