

31 January 2012

To : The Senate Community Affairs Committee

Re: **The Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011**

I am writing to express my reservations about the proposed "Stronger Futures" legislation, which I believe to be inadequate to properly address the issues facing indigenous people in Australia today.

Aboriginal people have been for far too long subjected to the political whims of successive governments. While all governments extoll the virtues of indigenous culture to the world to boost tourism, our policies continue to threaten the existence of the culture we so willingly sell.

The continuation of the intervention policy is not only bad for aboriginal people, it's bad for the nation. It's discriminatory roots perpetuate the white Australia policies of the past and cast this nation in a racist light internationally. It is bad for national security, removing people from large, interior and coastal remote areas of a large and largely unprotected country. We need the knowledge, expertise and land skills of indigenous people in order to maintain our own knowledge of the land, for security and resource purposes.

It is unfathomable that we do not regard indigenous people and their culture as a *national treasure*. All nations protect their national treasures, and they are usually just the built environment, as the people and much of the culture has disappeared. If the world can treasure the 2,000 year old Pyramids of Giza, or the ruins of Rome, surely Australia can see the far greater value of the oldest continuously living culture on earth whose knowledge and age dwarfs that of all the others?

Stop the intervention, Stop the discrimination. Protect aboriginal people and culture. Let's embrace their ancient wisdom about this country and protect their knowledge. Let them learn their languages in school. Take the politics out of the policy decisions. Create an independent commission or agency headed by respected indigenous leaders and other prominent experts on the issues. This should be a permanent entity, which would provide a continuity of policy and remove these issues from the whims of different political leadership.

Above all, you must consult with Aboriginal people first and foremost, and build a government policy that is based on what is best for them and the nation. The Stronger Futures legislation is not the answer.

Sincerely,

Kim Hoggard