

Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Northern Territory National Emergency Response Legislation

13th August 2007

I write because of my concern about aspects of the Northern Territory National Emergency Response bills currently before the Senate.

Academic research, Aboriginal organisations, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner all suggest that some of the changes proposed - such as the partial abolition of the permit system - could actually exacerbate social problems in Aboriginal communities.

The bill also fails to take up the 97 recommendations of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report.

The very serious issue of child abuse in Aboriginal communities must be dealt with effectively. Rushing bad laws through the Parliament will not help to protect vulnerable children. For the sake of the affected communities, it is important to get these laws right.

I urge the committee to undertake proper consultation with Aboriginal communities and organisations and ensure that the bills are significantly amended to address their concerns. Please ensure that the Senate does not rush the bills through in their current form.

To ensure that this opportunity is not wasted through unintended consequences, the bills should be deferred for further consideration when Parliament resumes on 10 September 2007.

Yours sincerely,

Ros Lewis