

11 November 2014

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Committee Secretary  
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir / Madam,

**LETTER IN SUPPORT OF NAAJA'S – SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS – REVIEW OF THE STRONGER FUTURES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY ACT 2012 AND RELATED LEGISLATION.**

I refer to earlier correspondence from the Anti-Discrimination Commission and thank you for the extension of time to submit this letter.

I have had the benefit of reviewing the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) submission to the Committee, which has been informed by their extensive experience in providing services to Aboriginal people in the Top End, in particular experience from travelling to remote communities across the Top End of the Northern Territory (NT).

I support NAAJA's recommendations in regard to Income Management (IM) and the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM).

I echo the serious and ongoing concerns raised by former NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioners, about the lack of adequate consultation with Aboriginal people in regard to the measures imposed, under Stronger Futures and its earlier incarnations in the Northern Territory.

In regards to Income Management, it is of ongoing concern that 9 out of 10 people on IM are Indigenous and that 61% of those on IM in the NT are women.

NAAJA's submission raises ongoing human rights concerns with IM, including daily discrimination against Aboriginal people using the BasicsCard. This includes the

discriminatory system to obtain exemptions, which includes numerous structural and systemic barriers for Aboriginal people living in remote communities of the NT. This is amplified by the new vulnerable income management categories, which will have a disproportionate effect on young people, as they are assumed to be vulnerable and are therefore placed on IM.

It is for the Federal Government to prove there is a benefit to these measures, to present evidence based findings of the positive impact of these measures, and to substantiate and justify IM as a 'special measure'. The blanket application of IM would make this difficult to establish. In contrast, NT research in 2012 which surveyed 180 women on IM in the NT (Equality Alliance, "Women's Experience of Income Management in NT" (2012)) - found that 74% of women felt discriminated against when they used the BasicsCard, and that 85% of Aboriginal women said it had not changed what they bought with their Centrelink payments.

I also note that the NAAJA submissions were made without access to the final Evaluation Report on Income Management in the NT, which NAAJA indicated had been provided to the government. Currently there are no evident benefits that would justify IM for NT Aboriginal people. It is only if evidence based material are obtained, demonstrating the benefits of compulsory IM, that it could be justified as a special measure, and therefore as being non-discriminatory.

Should you have any queries about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on 08 8999 1444 or at [sally.sievers@nt.gov.au](mailto:sally.sievers@nt.gov.au).

Yours faithfully,

**Sally Sievers**  
**Anti-Discrimination Commissioner**