

EMAIL SUBJECT: Submission re Stronger Futures

To the Senate Community Affairs Committee Regarding the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011

Christine Jacques-Doolan

I as an Aboriginal Woman wish to make a submission to the Committee to express my opposition to the proposed Stronger Futures legislation.

I understand that the present legislation with the NT Intervention has caused considerable disturbances within the communities both remote and urban, in the way the basic card was introduced without much consideration to the families already doing the right thing, and also assuming that all Aboriginal families are incapable of improving their lifestyles.

What your committee needs to remind itself, that with support from Strong Culturally Committed, Community leaders in their respective communities, who know each family well enough, that intervention from the Government does not solve the problems, it is the identified key people themselves who need to listen to their community needs and then analyse the situations where solutions can be addressed. Through training of appropriate people to work on setting up an agency (in the community) that deals with these issues at the local level with funded support properly managed and audited, that these problems can be dealt with.

I worked in an Early Intervention service that meant going into homes and talking with the families on issues that were of child protection matters, living conditions, etc. The people I met with were intelligent Aboriginal people who had become trapped in a system that had failed their most basic needs, the need to be listened to and then offered help in a culturally competent service. The families were all different, some took longer to work with, but no excuses for their behaviours were tolerated and it was made quite clear that families through identifying issues, started to create their own abundant futures, by having support in home and following simple suggestions on budgeting, cleaner houses, understanding the importance of education etc etc, by teaching at this level and making contact 2-3 times a week if need be to see changes occurring.

This not only made the families more aware of their own strengths, but started the ball rolling for them to create lifestyles that still had cultural connections, but gave people the chance to meet with their own fears to overcome poverty, minimise absenteeism for children at school, address mental health issues, seek health professionals, on timetables that suited their needs, but within a year long support or longer for individuals still struggling.

Our own Aboriginal people are the power, I know I am one of them, I have successfully completed a Teaching degree, along with two other degrees. Not only overcoming poverty, homelessness, D.V, Stolen Generations background, racism, learnt how to budget, live within my means, find support for my health, all with the help of individuals over time to put me back on track for a lifestyle that would benefit my children to become safer, stronger and more able to contribute to Aboriginal and Australian society. I have Traditional family living in the NT, my mother was born there, my family are still living on a remote community, I see myself going back there to help the community to gain a sense of responsibility on their lives, by speaking up and being supported by a network of people, to achieve better outcomes, with the community acknowledging their own strengths, based on work, education and health.

Deliver programs that are based on the communities you are dealing with, don't just send up Government employees who are not in for the long haul, send or make the people already based there accountable.

Give a two year trial, then consider the options, it is not good enough to assume that extending the present programs are working, give time to think about this, it would be welcomed by Aboriginal people, give people the right people to hear from about this proposal, our people, can change and will with the right support.

That is all I have to say.

Yours Sincerely,

C.Jacques-Doolan

Arranda Kunkga

Stolen Generations advocate, Teacher, Counsellor, Mental Health Project officer.