

1/2/2012

To whom it may concern in the Senate of the Federal Government of Australia,

I wish to make a submission regarding the 'Stronger Futures' legislation that is looking to be put forward to implementation in Australia.

I believe that the key changes are not only unfair but will be ineffective in addressing the underlying concerns and issues surrounding Indigenous Australian's lives.

Firstly, this legislation is in breach of many international human rights documents. Especially Article 1(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides that all people have the right to self determination. This means the right to develop their own future.

The food control laws have good intent behind them, but it undermines individuals and businesses sense of control. With closing premises, expenses will rise, competition will lower, people will struggle to get food. The quick and high prison terms allocated for people possessing alcohol will not fix the alcohol problem. Jailing people will not solve the underlying issues behind this.

Various laws including privacy law, property law, consumer law, business law, administrative law, welfare law, constitutional law, discrimination law, human rights law, are all affected by this legislation.

What concerns me most is that there has been no formal acknowledgement from the people themselves, such as the elders, that they are happy and agree with these changes. It has been proven that mutual partnerships and empowering, respectful relationships with the actual communities create change, basic communication-not condescension and miscommunication.

Top-down enforcement will only undermine the mess already there between the government and the Aboriginal people. Of course income management, including removing sometimes 70-100% of it if a child fails to attend school the allotted time is a serious example of this.

The difficulties with children with disabilities attending will mean that this will be increasingly unjust for these families. There needs to be many caveats if this is to be implemented at all.

I sincerely hope that these changes will not be made without much more thought put into how the communities will receive these, and what they believe will help them. Certainly, removing rights as individuals and communities is not only against human rights, but is not how to improve relations and functioning in our nation!