

Submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee Review of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment (Economic Empowerment) Bill 2021

I am an Australian citizen with European background who is concerned about the way Australian Aboriginal people are treated. I try to follow the various human rights issues attending them and do what is in my power to make a difference in the balance of justice, knowing full well my limited capacity in this but knowing too that there are many like me very concerned and frankly embarrassed by the way these proud and long-suffering people continue to be treated. I listen where I can to the experiences of Aboriginal people, some of whom I have had personal contact with. The many injustices they endure are mind boggling and in this limited personal submission I wish to address the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment (Economic Empowerment) Bill 2021.

My understanding is that the proposed Amendments have the potential to undermine the rights of Aboriginal people over their lands, lands that they have always had a close personal and cultural relationship with and which they wish to conserve and protect.

This Bill will take away power from the on-the-ground Traditional Owners (TO) and given instead to the land councils and the TO's connected to them. It is not enough or fair to only consult with the land councils where there is clearly a conflict of interest as they are government funded. This Bill needs to be placed on hold until there has been widespread consultations with TO's and communities on the ground so that they will be able to give free, prior and informed consent to any changes and undertakings.

If non-Aboriginal people were to have their property rights diluted in this manner there would be general outrage yet the Government is proposing, through this Bill, to do just that. It is yet another injustice that will, contrary to the title of the Bill, disempower and add more shame to the treatment of the First Nations of Australia.

I have followed Prof Jon Altman's (ANU) work and trust and highly respect his commitment to researching in this area so I refer you to his detailed evaluation with regards this Bill - [Economic-Empowerment-Bill-2021-Jon-Altman-assessment.pdf](https://concernedaustralians.com.au/Economic-Empowerment-Bill-2021-Jon-Altman-assessment.pdf) (concernedaustralians.com.au)

Pia Pagotto 4th November 2021