



**Submission to the Senate Inquiry for the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill and related bill: the Social Security Legislation Amendment Bill 2011**

Prepared by

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We have seen no benefit to the local, Indigenous, Warlpiri people of Yuendumu in the last five years from the government's Intervention measures. In fact there has been a deterioration in the following areas:

- self esteem of local people
- relations between local people and government organizations
- relations between local and non-Indigenous people in general
- social cohesion within the Warlpiri community
- quality of life of local people
- services and infrastructure
- ratio of local to non-local employment

Yuendumu used to be a progressive innovative community in which government and non-government organizations worked together with the community towards a shared vision of the future. Today it is fragmented with little communication between organizations and poor communication with the local community members.

Income management has not dealt with the problems it was intended to address. e.g. almost 50% of 20 to 40 year old men are currently in jail, a third of these for motor vehicle and alcohol related crimes, a third for breach of court orders and failing to appear in court, and the remainder for all other crimes. These are the fathers of the youngest generation who grow up without the presence of male role models.

We strongly fear that the proposed Amendment to the Social Security Bill equally will have unforeseen and unintended negative results. We cannot at all see how it would address the aim: improved school attendance. The latter will require a school with more community involvement, more local teachers and staff, a strong bilingual program, more cultural input in the curriculum and more local leadership.

Financial punishment of parents will not improve school attendance. But it will affect the whole family, the children themselves, as well as their senior relatives on old age pensions on whom the care will fall.

We feel that another 10 years of NTER policy will be an unmitigated disaster for this community, socially, culturally, psychologically, economically and in terms of health and safety. Instead we urge you to consider developing a working relationship with local people. Local and non-local people working together, developing friendships and mutual understanding, produces the best outcomes.

In many aspects local aspirations are the same as those of the government. We very strongly believe they can be achieved, but only in partnership.

~~Yasmine Musharbash~~  
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