

EMAIL SUBJECT – Submission re Stronger Futures Northern Territory Bill 2011

To the Senate Community Affairs Committee

Regarding the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011

My name is Erica Jolly. I am the education/health liaison person for Graduate Women-SA

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

Dear Senators,

The government is not creating 'Stronger Futures' when it set out to continue keeping the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory subject to the demands of the bureaucracy which implements these limitations that undermine self-reliance and capacities for independent thinking of the adult Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory. The assumption behind the Bill with this ironic title is that the only way to bring people forward is to undermine their capacity to make decisions for themselves and their families.

Bureaucracies are expensive. As with the previous Howard government, this Labor government has chosen punitive approaches to bring about the changes they see as necessary to engage children in education. So much more money has been spent in this punitive and often degrading approach to Aboriginal people than on the development of the appropriate structures for schools and health centres and for avenues of real work for people who live in remote regions.

Professor Fiona Stanley, former Australian of the Year, made clear how important it is to engage honestly and directly with the Aboriginal communities when making legislative decisions that affect their future. That has not happened. And this legislation being put forward does not even appear to take into account views expressed by the communities did consult. It's like the failure of the Howard government to consider the suggestions made in 'The Little Children are Sacred' report.

Children take on the attitudes of their parents and those attitudes influence their engagement with education. Where parents were denied education, where there has been a history of neglect by governments, the situation cannot be resolved by measures that increase dependence. For example, for mainly non-Indigenous students you will find documents like the SA 'Framework for Effective Learning' which seek to build on 'personalised and connected learning' and 'build on the resources, skills and knowledge' in the home'. [p68]

What will children have to build on in their homes where parents are treated as dependents whose 'resources, skills and knowledge' are disparaged and considered of no value? Think of what this legislation means for children in the long term. Resentment of treatment of parents is not a sound basis for entering mainstream education.

Please withdraw this legislation and develop an alternative policy, one

which seeks to provide employment – National Broadband roll out in the NT is an example of one area of employment - and encourage the empowerment of Aboriginal communities.

The 'Teaching for Effective Learning Framework' set up by the SA Department of Education says 'Learning for effective *teaching*' requires 'Engagement with the community' [p 20]. The framework insists also that Aboriginal learners need to connect with their country and be aware that they are 'going to bring their two cultural worlds together'. [p 54]. If 'learning for effective *teaching*' requires engagement with the community with respect, then enabling Aboriginal communities to bring the two cultures together in a way that respects their culture – since the Internet will be a valuable tool in their schools – will require the same engagement and respect, most particularly when you consider the legislation which will have an effect on the quality of their lives for the next decade and beyond.

That is how you build stronger futures, not by putting Aboriginal people in the NT through another decade of dependence.

Thank you

Erica Jolly – education/health liaison Graduate Women-SA