

Submission by Jim Morris in favour of referring the
The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment (Economic Empowerment) Bill 2021
to the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

My interest in the Bill

I have never visited the Northern Territory but am repeatedly reminded of the deprivation in NT Aboriginal communities which cannot be dismissed as 'lifestyle choices'. I have heard people working in Sydney's welfare organisations for homeless people say homeless people like the lifestyle. Everyone is entitled to enjoy being alive no matter their circumstances and to make do with their situations but when homeless people are given permanent public housing their elation and gratitude expressed in the media makes it clear that every Australian deserves secure healthy accommodation, work opportunities and public services.

Money is what money does

Economic empowerment is the focus of the proposed Bill. Who is to be empowered? Is there to be an equal focus on the social and cultural advancement of the Aboriginal land owners and other NT Aboriginals and on environmental maintenance and regeneration? In case the economic empowerment divides communities rather than enriches them, the Bill must be reviewed after a few years by an eminent person. This needs to be required in the Bill.

Self determination

There is no self determination without consultation and collaboration, difficult as it is. I am very aware of the homelessness in Sydney and the blatant refusal to provide the needed public housing by state and federal governments. That's because public housing isn't conducive to rising land values. That's economic empowerment of the wrong kind, exercised by decision makers on their own people, decision makers with their own property investment interests at heart.

If greater economic empowerment is obtained from the Bill by groups who don't use the funds for the people generally, I hope a legislated for independent review will bring this to light for correction.

Yours sincerely
Jim Morris