

Submission re Stronger Futures

To the Senate Community Affairs Committee

Regarding the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011

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We wish to make a submission to the Committee to express our opposition to the proposed Stronger Futures legislation.

We are very concerned at the Government's intention to extend the life of the Northern Territory Intervention legislation. Although we have heard positive feedback from one community that has become a participant, we have also heard that communities who were prior to the NTIL developing their own programmes and strategies to build their communities, and chose to continue independently, have been deprived of resources and assistance to do so. And their communities have suffered considerably. We find that shocking and absolutely unacceptable.

A strategy that discriminates against some communities in order to help others is very faulty. That is one of our concerns.

We also believe that a great deal of the funds during the implementation of this programme went into the salaries and accommodation of visiting consultants brought in for the purpose. This was a very inefficient use of funds, when the needs of these communities are so great, and makes us question who are the real beneficiaries of the NTIL..

We also believe that the proposed legislation does not reflect the views expressed by communities during the Stronger Futures consultations, and we fear that it will further embed the disempowerment and discrimination that was begun under the Northern Territory Intervention. This is hardly the way to engage genuine community participation and achieve equitable results.

We ask that the legislation be withdrawn and that a new alternative policy be developed, based on genuine consultation, community empowerment, the respect of Aboriginal culture, lands and languages, and the fundamental right of Aboriginal people to be able to control their own lives. These crucial matters have been consistently overlooked by Australian Governments. This is a human rights issue and by enforcing legislation upon Aboriginal people, this Government is failing in its democratic duty.

We concur completely with the concerns expressed by community groups and national organisations and we ask that you listen to them and recommend the Australian Government does as well and scraps the proposed legislation.

Thank you.