



**The Hon Jenny Macklin MP  
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services  
and Indigenous Affairs**

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Mrs Julia Irwin MP  
Chair, Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin

*Julia*

Thank you for your letter of 26 November 2009 about the petition received by the Committee in relation to the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). I apologise for the delay in responding.

As you are aware, legislation to lift the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act and make necessary changes to the NTER laws was introduced into Parliament on 25 November 2009.

These changes relate to measures introduced through legislation – measures like compulsory income management, restrictions on alcohol and sexually explicit materials, community stores licensing, the compulsory five year township leases, law enforcement powers and business management powers.

The Commonwealth Government is proposing changes to these measures so they are more clearly consistent with the Racial Discrimination Act. These changes will need to be approved by the Parliament. They are being considered by a Senate Committee, which will report in March 2010.

The Commonwealth Government consulted extensively with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory on the future design of the NTER measures. Views were obtained from more than 500 consultations involving thousands of participants in the 73 remote communities and town camps, and from workshops with regional leaders and stakeholder organisation representatives. The Government listened very carefully to the views put by those people consulted. As a result there have been changes to some of the original proposals put forward in the Government's discussion paper.

The Government has published a detailed summary of these consultations, as well as an independent audit of the consultations, both are which available at [www.fahcsia.gov.au/indigenous](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/indigenous).

More information on new support for families, children and communities across the Northern Territory can be found in the “Policy Statement” at [www.fahcsia.gov.au/indigenous](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/indigenous).

The Government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal people in the implementation of all these new measures. The first Australian Early Childhood Development Index released in December 2009 has found that children in the Northern Territory are by far the most vulnerable on all development indicators. The Government is committed to turning this around.

Yours sincerely

**JENNY MACKLIN MP**