

SenateEnqACSSJan.10

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Social Security and other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform and Reinstatement of Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009 and the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and other Legislation Amendment (2009 measures) Bill 2009, along with the Families, Housing, Community services and Indigenous Affairs and other Legislation Amendment (Restoration of Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009.

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We are very worried about the proposed legislation.

It seems to us that it will not fix up one big failure of the current intervention – forcing a 'one size fits all' on to all Aboriginal families in the Northern Territory receiving government assistance.

We want the Racial Discrimination Act re-instated, as was promised. We have lived with racism all our lives. The RDA cannot prevent it, but without it, things are worse. We are not always respected here in the city. It seems that the RDA is not being re-instated but a trick way is being done around it: to make everyone on government assistance be welfare quarantined, first in the Northern Territory and then in the rest of Australia. It would be very interesting if all the aged pensioners in Sydney had their money quarantined : then maybe they'd understand what our friends in NT are going through!

We live in Western Sydney. Our families are included in the 'disadvantaged' category , as are the many people who come to our centre in Penrith. We know from our own experience that for people to come off drugs and alcohol, they need counselling, support and a reason for living. Banning grog shifts alcoholics elsewhere. It does not help cure their addiction.

Our hearts go out to our sisters and brothers in the Northern Territory. It is shameful for them have to form a special queue for food and shop only at certain stores. It brings back memories to us of what we had to do as children in New South Wales country towns. At least in the city here , we can go to Centrelink; we can ask for our income to be managed if we want to, but so many in the Northern Territory do not have that choice.

We know what it is to try to hold our culture when our language was forbidden and our rights to country have been lost and our sacred places fenced off. Now it seems our sisters and brothers in the North are suffering the same fate. We suffered under 'Mission Station Managers' in the past. Now, managers without knowledge of the culture, are being flown in, paid large salaries and given air-conditioned houses when the Aboriginal people are still living in broken down hot places. How do you think the people feel when they see this?

How many new homes have been built for Aboriginal families in disadvantaged communities? Why is it taking so long? Were the designs discussed with the families ? We suffered from poorly designed houses imposed on the 'missions' in the past. From what we hear, basic mistakes are still being made.

The proposed changes in legislation do not make economic sense. We find it hard to believe that the government is prepared to spend \$7000 in order to quarantine an income of around \$11,000.

