

Submissions by:

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD South) Ltd

concerning:

Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007 and related Bills

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Parliament House

Canberra

legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Our knowledge base and role:

We provide legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders throughout the area of Queensland that is south of Mackay and across to the state borders.

Our organisation's primary role is to provide criminal, civil and family law representation and advice. We are also concerned with Law and Social Justice Reform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This role is guided by the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendations*.

Children's safety:

We commend the Government in wanting to decisively address the disadvantage of our people and particularly, the plight of our children, as documented in such Reports as *Little Children are Sacred*. However, we are concerned that these Bills do not effectively do that. We too have a passion and a sense of urgency to save our children and we believe that the core problems can be solved. We look to securing children at once and the long-term strategy of the *Recommendations*.

We understand that the Law Council of Australia has made submissions to the Prime Minister in which the LCA outlines the main objectionable issues to the Bills. We urge the Committee to be informed on those issues the LCA raises. The proposed legislation seems at odds with many recommendations of the Report, starting with its initial one for governments and community leaders to meet and agree on a workable way to deal with issues of child abuse and disadvantage.

Our concern:

We ask that the proposed legislation be delayed to allow Parliament to consult with people who combine community insight with professional experience and with research and practical knowledge. Our organisation would be able to inform on solutions that would be both effective and immediate.

Yours faithfully,

Shane Duffy

CEO

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD South) Ltd

10 August 2007