



From: Reconciliation Victoria
Sent: Thursday Aug 9, 2007
To: Legal and Constitutional Committee - SENATE
Subject: Inquiry into Northern Territory National Emergency Response

Dear Committee,

We wish to express our strong concern at the lack of meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities in the development of the Northern Territory Emergency Response legislation.

The legislation is inconsistent with the recommendations of the *Little Children Are Sacred* Report into child sexual abuse in remote communities and it ignores the advice and expertise of a very wide range of experienced Indigenous leaders and organisations.

We would also like to express our deep concern at the speed with which this legislation has been rushed through Parliament without a reasonable length of time for community consultation or organisational responses to be considered.

Reconciliation Victoria would like to reiterate the importance of urgently addressing instances of child abuse where and when they exist, and of addressing as a matter of national emergency, the extremely poor conditions and complex social issues endured by many remote communities. However the ill conceived and racially discriminatory legislation before the Senate will only serve to further disempower Indigenous people.

The issues of child abuse and violence in communities have been constant concerns for well over a decade. Many Aboriginal communities across this continent and especially in the NT have been asking for assistance and support from the Federal Government for decades, to no avail. There is no doubt that there is a desperate need for resources, programs and infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities.

However, the legislation currently before the Senate represents a tragic repetition of the paternalistic mistakes of the past.

Reconciliation Victoria supports the response of the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory in addressing the very real issues facing remote communities in the NT. The *Little Children are Sacred* report and the many reports that have come before it point to the need for broad based, culturally sensitive, consultative and long term solutions.

We believe that the vast majority of Australians seek a sustainable society based on just and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This legislation is both unjust and disrespectful.

We urge the Committee to take full consideration of the response of the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory, and recommend that this legislation be delayed until the expertise of Indigenous organisations and leaders have been incorporated into any Federal Government intervention into Indigenous communities.

SIGNED: Reconciliation Victoria CEO, Frank Hytten, 0432 345 652
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