

**From:** ANTaR VIC

**Sent:** Thursday, 9 August 2007 5:49 PM

**To:** Legal and Constitutional, Committee (SEN)

**Subject:** ANTaR Victoria submission to Inquiry into the Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 2) 2007-2008

9 August 2007

Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee

*Re: Inquiry into the Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No. 2) 2007-2008*

Dear Senate Committee,

On behalf of ANTaR Victoria, I outline my grave concerns about Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bills and urge you to reject, or at a minimum, delay these bills because

- They override the Racial Discrimination Act.
- They have been rushed into parliament and do not allow for thought and due consideration.
- The changes will do little to protect Northern Territory Aboriginal children from abuse, are inconsistent with the recommendations of the writers of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report and are racially discriminatory.
- The first recommendation of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report was for governments and Indigenous community leaders to get together to come with a comprehensive plan to deal with issues of child abuse in Indigenous communities. Federal Government has ignored this advice.
- The bills seize Aboriginal land, remove Aboriginal communities' ability to have a say on who can come onto their land, force Aboriginal boards of directors to accept Canberra bureaucrats into their board rooms and make Aboriginal people more dependent on the bureaucracy. Permits under the current Act allow Traditional Owners to control who comes onto their land, not just have a say: no permit, no entry. There has always been an exception for police and for people exercising a statutory function.
- These measures are not considered and ignore decades of advice of Indigenous leaders and experts whose calls for urgent action have been ignored.
- The words 'children' or 'child' do not appear in the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bills. They have nothing to do with protecting children.

- Any serious action on Aboriginal child abuse should draw on the Emergency Response and Development Plan developed by the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory, the expertise of organizations like the Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care and Aboriginal professionals like Professor Judy Atkinson.

Yours sincerely  
Jill Webb  
Chair  
ANTaR Victoria

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*Our office is on the land of the Wurundjeri People*