

10th August 2007

To the Honourable Senates and members of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee

Re Inquiry into the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007 & Related Bills

We urge you to recommend that the current legislation be dropped, or if that is not possible, be delayed to allow proper scrutiny and consultation with the stakeholders most affected.

We consider the current 500 or so pages of the Bills to be fatally flawed because:

There has been no consultation with the Australian citizens who are affected by this legislation. They have been unable to brief their Parliamentary representatives, let alone their culturally appropriate representatives, so they have been unable to give **informed comments**.

The proposed suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act is discriminatory. If the Bills necessitate this suspension they are, ipso facto, discriminatory and the Bills should not be passed.

It is wrong to quarantine the welfare payments of a group of Australians on an ethnic basis when large numbers of Australians from other ethnic backgrounds – including Anglo-Celts – are also mistreating their children, using welfare payments for drugs and grogs etc and yet are not treated similarly.

The Government policy, even if well-intentioned, is a recipe for disaster because:

- it does not build on the good things which exist in Indigenous Communities. (See the ANTaR Success Stories published on www.antar.org.au)
- it does not increase the social capacity of the people in communities rather it demonises and belittles them
- it is giving millions of dollars in wages to non-Indigenous people who are inexperienced and ignorant about Aboriginal people, have little knowledge about local culture and languages and who will act as “*Observers ie Bosses*”). This would not be accepted as an Oz-Aid project!
- It is taking away approximately 8000 CDEP jobs and promising a paltry 2000 Aboriginal jobs to replace them. Meanwhile, the work done by the 8000 will no longer be done.
- It is suspending the Permit System against the advice of the Northern Territory Police, which will make it even harder to stop paedophiles and drug and grog runners from accessing the communities.

We want protection for children through justice for Indigenous Australians – land rights, a vibrant culture, similar life expectancy, health and a great education - tragically, these Bills are unlikely to achieve this. They are more likely to lead to disastrous failures and then a back lash about any other, more consultative and nuanced approaches.

Yours sincerely,

Graham and Monique Bond