Stronger Futures in the N.T. Bill

Dear Senators,

I've got a few comments on this so called "Stronger Futures" legislation as it is applied to the Northern Territory.
I have no qualifications other than growing up in the in the NT and spending time in aboriginal, mixed, and non aboriginal communities there.

I have to object to these bills not because aboriginal people are plaster saints. But because a group of my fellow citizens are being targeted for being less wealthy, receiving money from Centrelink and being aboriginal. This is camouflaged by the Federal Government choosing to attack every benefit recipient in the Territory.

We now have a situation of people, who have paid all their bills from their minimal social security income are having their bills not paid on time by those who seek to patronise them. The basics card is degrading for those on it. But that's probably the objective.

Growing up in the NT, I could see the implicit bargains being made between aboriginal communities and the Territory and Federal government.

The Health and Education ones went something like this…

- "We'll pretend to provide you with an education and you pretend to learn."

- "We'll give you a health system that isn't as good as that given to urban Australians and you keep quiet."

The payoff for this was aboriginal people were left alone. Then, a few years ago the old "leave us alone" side of the bargin was ripped away.
If the populist media and some politicians are to be believed, NT aborigines must be a bunch of alcoholic paedophiles. This is total rubbish.
A large minority of the aboriginal people living in the NT don't drink at all. The people who do are just more visible as they have fewer dwellings to hide their drunkenness in, unlike whites.
As for sexual assault almost the same thing could be said.

Alcohol fuelled violence does occur in towns and communities. But there is one thing that I never heard of when I was living there. A liquor outlet losing its licence and being closed – permanently – for selling alcohol to drunken people.
As a child I remember picking my way to school through the homeless blackfellas and whitefellas recovering from the night before at the Parap Hotel. Selling alcohol to drunks made the proprietor of that Hotel a rich man.
One rule for him, another rule for the blackfellows.

There are winners from all of this though.

- The populist press gets Ooga Booga stories of the natives doing stupid things. I s'pose the TV couch potatoes can feel superior.
- A large self serving bureaucracy expands to "manage" (badly) the majority of people who have got by on what Centrelink have given then for years.

As a conclusion, not everybody aspires to a McMansion, two cars and a boat. Some of those people have brown skin and come from my old place. Why don't you stop having a go at them? I lot of aboriginal people I knew had more commonsense and life skills than some of the people towing their poodles around Toorak. (Yes, I've been there.)

Yours,
James Sturtz