St Timothy's
Parish
17 Stevens Road
VERMONT
VIC 3133

TEL: 9878 8858

19th January 2012

Dear Senators,

As members of a local parish Social Justice group who have been following the course of the NTER or Intervention and the story of the Aboriginal people, we are particularly concerned that the Government is planning to extend the current policies, albeit with some additions and changes, especially when we hear so loudly from different quarters that the Aboriginal people themselves wish to see it stopped.

We see the Northern Territory Intervention as a racist policy imposed from 'on high' and we strongly urge that any legislation aimed at extending it should be withdrawn. It is a policy that focuses mainly on punitive measures that will only continue to further demoralise, disempower and dehumanise Aboriginal people.

Your own Government figures from the *Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Monitoring Report January – June 2011* show that the Intervention has not worked and in fact the incidence of self-harm and suicide has increased since 2007.

Aboriginal people have not been truly and respectfully heard or treated with the dignity that is the right of all human beings. The continuation of the Intervention and proposed legislation will not allow for Aboriginal people to have the right of self-determination which we know to be not in keeping with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Both James Anaya (UN Special Human Rights Rapporteur) and Navi Pillay (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) who have come to Australia in the last few years and visited with the Aboriginal people, have seen and reported on the unacceptable situation the Intervention has placed on them.

It saddens us to see how Aboriginal people are treated, a people confirmed as having the oldest continuous culture on the planet. They may have difficult issues to overcome, issues in large part that originated at the time of colonisation, but the blanket approach of the Intervention has not been the way of dealing with the problems that exist, an approach that treats the people as an homogenous group with measures that are imposed rather than come to through respectful dialogue and consultation. We have seen and heard of the more recent and earlier so-called consultations and do not accept them as being genuine.

We thus urge a serious re-think on the Intervention and its continuation and ask most strongly that it be withdrawn.

St Timothy's Social Justice Group