

I would like to submit my comments in regards to this Inquiry and two related bills.

Primarily I do not believe that a 'big stick' approach solves the underlying problems in Indigenous communities. The Intervention has been in place for a number of years now, buying time for REAL measures to be found and implemented where these measures were to start to address the issues, rather than a bandaid over the sore.

It has been widely publicised that the Intervention is inhumane and discriminatory. The fact that something needed to be done radically is something I understand, and for this reason I believe many have been tolerant of the Intervention, including myself. However, to now be years down the track and have no real progress made in solutions to the issues – and to be putting forward Bills that have nothing further to add than to continue with this 'big stick' bandaid – is something that I cannot come to terms with. I think it's disgraceful.

We need to start to engage measures where Indigenous communities have a say in how to save their own communities. My understanding is that all inquiries and commissions have recommended this as a key element to success, yet we continue to ignore this over and over again, and simply "lay down rules".

This 'big stick' approach strips these communities of their dignity. Our first Australians deserve more.

### **Report findings**

I am also concerned that the latest report by the government (finding that most indigenous people wanted a continuation of pornography and alcohol bans and the introduction of mandatory schooling for social security payments) was not transparent enough and did not necessarily engage all spectrums of the communities.

I am certain there are indigenous people who agree with these measures. I met one such person in the Northern Territory last year. However this person was fortunate enough to have a mother that raised him to have dignity and respect, and as such he was gainfully employed and totally embraced both his indigenous and new white cultures.

He believed that the current form of the Intervention was a blessing. He also believed that the current state of a community is that own communities fault. Although I believe his view has merits (hence why it is clear that we must help communities help themselves), he was unable to embrace the fact that the journey for everyone is different, and not everyone has been fortunate enough to have his upbringing. This 'big stick' mentality sits well with someone who cannot see that a situation is grey and NOT black and white.

### **Singling out Indigenous communities**

A perpetuating cycle of alcohol and/or violence and/or lack of dignity, motivation, dreams etc is not specific to indigenous communities. Throughout Australia there are all races and walks of life, where children suffer due to a bad environment and bad parenting.

To introduce bills to 'big stick' only indigenous communities for problems that are throughout Australia and all its races is discrimination. Surely this strips all dignity away, to be singled out?

Specific concerns for each bill are as follows:

### **Social Security Legislation Amendment Bill 2011**

These measures may increase school attendance however by a child simply attending a school does not automatically result in that child embracing education.

I met a young indigenous student in the country town of Wentworth 2 months ago, who was not in school during school hours. His parents were both a short distance away drunk. Essentially he was not at school because no one made him attend school. To this end, forced attendance could go some way in helping this child's future. We spoke at some length and it was clear that he had no interest in education was bored, lacked self esteem and had no motivation and no dreams. THIS is the issue that needs to be addressed.

### **Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2011**

I am appalled at the reintroduction of this measure for a further 10 years. Surely we must be more proactive and engage REAL solutions, so that this sort of mandate does not need to remain in place for such a long period of time.

### **Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011**

I found this one particularly interesting in that the Intervention has been in place since 2007, some 4-5 years, yet we need to pass a bill so that in 3 years time we can determine if restricting alcohol has had a positive effect?

I believe alcohol is a massive issue in Australian society. We have our Nation's children drinking themselves to death. Our police, paramedic and hospital resources are sucked up in to this social nightmare, taking them away from where these resources are really needed and all at tax payer's expense.

I believe this bill should be extended to ALL of Australia such that we can start to manage the alcohol crisis this Nation has found itself in.

There could not be a better example of this issue than Australia Day, where our children paint themselves and drape themselves with the Australian Flag, whilst getting so drunk they can no longer stand, in order to celebrate a day that is not a day that most first Australians feel joy from – all the while believing that this is what it is to be Australian?