To the Senate Community Affairs Committee
Regarding the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011

I wish to make a submission to the Committee to express my opposition to the proposed Stronger Futures legislation.

Since 2009 I've been fortunate to work alongside and learn much from Noongar human service employees in the Southwest of W.A. – in Education, Housing, Child Protection, Health, Corrective Services and not-for-profit Community and Disability Services. I know that non-Aboriginal Australians simply have no right to legislate for invasion and re-invasion in the Northern Territory.

It is to our international shame that this flaunting of human rights has happened, and that we are again perpetrators of abuse of the very rights that underpin healing. Driven largely by an emotional appeal to protect children from abuse, the intervention showed that we were again in broad cultural denial - this time of the level of child abuse occurring across the non-Aboriginal community, where 'intervention' of any kind in parenting rights is a last resort. We are in denial, too, of the racism inherent in our institutions: now is your chance to formally recognise this and move carefully to turn this clumsy and ill-conceived process around. Empowerment and resourcing of Aboriginal decision-making, applying *cultural competence* (i.e. knowledge+understanding+committment to/capacity for appropriate action) is now essential, not re-abuse.

I concur with the concerns expressed by community groups and national organisations, that the legislation does not reflect the views expressed by communities during the Stronger Futures consultations, and that it will further embed the disempowerment and discrimination that was begun under the Northern Territory Intervention.

I ask that the legislation be withdrawn and that an alternative policy is developed, based on genuine consultation, community empowerment, the respect of Aboriginal culture, lands and languages, and the fundamental right of Aboriginal people to be able to control their own lives.

Thank you.

Dr. M. Bastable.