Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011 and Two Related Bills

I am writing to oppose the proposed legislation that is called Stronger Futures. I feel that this is a 10 year extension of the Northern Territory Intervention, where grouse human rights violations were enacted with the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act.

This new proposed legislation is again directly targeting Aboriginal communities, which is racial discrimination.

The believe the legislation should be withdrawn because:

- The proposed legislation undermines the demands by Aboriginal peoples in the NT for a return to control over their communities and the right to self—determination.

  See United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). Articles 3, 4, 18, 20, & 26.2 at http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

- The proposed legislation, rather than providing support and encouragement, focuses predominantly on punitive regulatory approaches such as cuts to family support payments, for example, when children don't attend school.

  Read, "*Cuts to Welfare Payments for School Non Attendance - Requested or Imposed?*" (October 2011) http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/media/Welfare-Cuts-Requested-or-Imposed.pdf

  Michael Brull, "*2012 or 1912? Stigmatising and humiliating Aboriginal parents,*" (27 December 2011) http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/3747968.html

  UNDRIP Article 14 http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

- This blanket approach has failed to acknowledge the cultural strengths within the majority of communities. The NTER has been an exercise aimed at changing the behavior of Aboriginal people, which has proven to be damaging and unsuccessful as shown by the Government's own *Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Monitoring Report January – June 2011*

  Professor Jon Altman summary, at http://tracker.org.au/2011/11/evidently-a-new-intervention/

- The proposed legislation is a further step towards total disempowerment. Decisions about every aspect of life are being taken over, formulated and implemented through the various arms of government. By undermining peoples' capacity to be actively engaged in initiating and planning the future direction of their lives, they are denied a normal healthy existence and the current disillusionment, depression and despair will only increase. According to Government statistics

the incidence of suicide and self-harm in the NT have increased since the introduction of the Intervention in 2007

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Monitoring Report January – June 2011 http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/ctg_nt_monitoring_rpt_janjun_2011/Documents/ctg_nt_monitoring__rpt_pt2_janjun11.pdf page 66

- Repeal NTER laws and revert to already established laws that apply equally to all citizens to address dysfunctional behaviors across all parts of Australians. There are already laws that address social issues of domestic violence, drunkenness, truancy. The Australian law is written to be obeyed by all its citizens.

- In 2007, as part of the NTER Legislation, the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) was established in the NT for the purpose of monitoring supposed paedophile rings and high levels of child sexual abuse. In July 2009 it was acknowledged by John Lawler (CEO of ACC) that there had been no evidence of paedohpile rings in the NT and it is also now known that the incidence of child sexual abuse is similar to that of other states. It is therefore without just cause that the proposed legislation continues the activity of the Australian Crime Commission with its special coercive powers in the NT.

  See, *Loss of Rights*, p 62-64 & also http://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/programs/criminal-law-human-rights/criminal-law/crime-commission.cfm

'When Aboriginal people are given or take responsibility to address the issues in their community and can come up with their own solutions you will end up with a better way of addressing these issues.' (M Carter, community member and CEO of Nindilingarri, meeting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2 August 2010 cited in 'Social Justice Report 2011 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner' (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011).

Indigenous people as their own leaders for their own communities and taking control of issues affecting their people will bring about effective, sustainable and meaningful development; it will also ensure they are valued with dignity. Developing human capabilities will produce effective, sustainable and meaningful development and this can be achieved by a rights-based approach.