Submission to Senate Community Affairs Committee
Social Security Legislation Amendment Bill 2011

Dear Senators,

We, 7 concerned citizens of the city of Berlin (Germany), wish to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Income Management and the NT Intervention.

After having seen the documentary „Our Generation“, we are shocked and appalled by the way Aboriginal people are treated by the Australian Government. We always believed Australia to be a fair country with social justice for all. It is such a disappointment to see that the Australian value of a ‚fair go‘ in reality only goes for *white* Australians. Further, it is horrendous that a western democracy like Australia so vehemently tries to eradicate Aboriginal identity. Prime Minister Gillard’s call for Aboriginal people to change their behaviour (Closing the gap speech 2011) can’t be seen as anything else but a return to assimilation. Instead of blazing a new trail, Labor is taking the wrong path.

We recommend the Government to:

1) put an end to mandatory income management.

It is an indirect racial discriminatory measure that furthermore has not proven to be effective. It is plain clear, that it mainly aims at Aboriginal people. Making income management legislation applicable to all Australians doesn’t change this. Instead, even more Aboriginal people will be damaged.

2) re-establish bilingual education

Culture is transported by language. Prohibiting bilingual eduction means suffocating Aboriginal culture.

3) sincerely start treating the cause of Aboriginal disadvantage instead of the symptoms.

This requires first of all a change in the attitude of *white* Australians towards Aboriginal people. It involves among others:

- accepting that Aboriginal people are equal yet distinct
- respecting Aboriginal identity, language and culture
- language and cross cultural training and education of *white* service providers, teachers, doctors, policemen, politicians and public servants
- allowing Aboriginal ways of governance, negotiation and leadership to become a real part of political processes.

Only by giving up dominant behaviour will *white* Australians be able to really ‚hear‘ what Aboriginal people have to say and can true empowerment of Aboriginal people be made possible. Continuing NTER-measures is only more of the same things that haven’t worked.

4) introduce a Bill of Rights to protect the fundamental rights of Aboriginal people instead of more legislation that restricts these rights. The NTER has shown clearly that this omission in Australian national legislation allows Governments to trample Aboriginal justice under foot. It gives Australian politicians a power over the indiviual rights of people, that no other western country would like its politicians to have in the 21st century. The Australian government has reached a point at which it is abusing this power for the benefit of the dominant *white* majority.

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