Proposed STRONGER FUTURES legislation.

There are many areas where the Stronger Futures legislation is flawed and I presume there will be many submissions that will attempt to bring these flaws to the committee's attention. However, there have been many good outcomes from the 2007 NTER that have been overshadowed by the publicity given to some of the worst elements of the Intervention.

I wish to bring to the committee's attention just a small number of these elements arising from the 2007 NTER.

1. RACIAL DISCRIMATION. The Intervention was based largely on the basis of race hence the need to suspend the Racial Discrimination Act. There needs to be a restoration of the Act and a way found to deliver the services to those needing them

2. SIGNAGE. The current blue on white signage introduced during the 2007 Intervention is offensive and needs to be removed immediately. It is authoritarian and belongs in another age or in a dictatorial regime.

3. SIHIP CONTRACTS. The contracts used to provide renovations, rebuilds and new housing by contractors under the 2007 Intervention need serious scrutiny. They in no way reflect best practice used by governments or private enterprise in other states. Close scrutiny of these contracts will reveal clauses that would be unacceptable in any other context particularly the "no risk" clauses.

4. CHILD ABUSE. The 2007 Intervention was predicated largely on the sexual abuse of children and the existence of paedophile rings operating in communities. There have been appallingly few arrests and convictions for these crimes. This indicates that either the information on child abuse was wrong or the policing has been ineffective. If the information was wrong then this needs to be officially recognised in an attempt to remove the stigma that has been cast upon men in aboriginal communities. If the policing has been ineffective and children are still being abused, then there needs to be a complete revisitation of the techniques being used.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS MANAGERS. The appointment of General Business Managers in each community has, at it's best, been of minimal impact in communities at great expense. The employment of GBM's runs in parallel with the employment of

Shire Service Managers by Local Government Shires. GBM's are in a position higher than Shire Service Managers and as a consequence and as part of their role they are involved in many community issues where they override the authority of Service Managers. This leads to unproductive conflict. The role of GBM's needs to be more clearly defined with a mind to other stakeholders and authorities in communities.

6. ALCOHOL. Prohibition has never worked. While most communities already had alcohol restrictions in place before the 2007 NTER the government deemed it necessary to impose further restrictions on communities. As prior community imposed restrictions never stopped the flow of alcohol into communities I cannot understand why the government felt the need to impose further restrictions. What was need was a little bit of lateral thinking – why not control the amount and strength of alcohol consumed by imposing a quota or voucher system? There are a number of examples where this type system works with great success.

7. ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT. The state of aboriginal employment is appalling. Contractors are required to have a 20% aboriginal workforce. Consistently they claim that they are fulfilling their contract obligations by employing aboriginal workers. This is simply not true. Local Government Shires and community councils need a ready local workforce but are able to attract only small numbers of workers. Much of this is due to the totally ineffective government funded "job networks" and the unwritten Centrelink code of not "breaching" aboriginals even if suitable work is available in their communities.

8. REPORTING. Don't believe much of what you read and even less of what people tell you – find out the truth for yourself. There has been much misreporting of information and date surrounding the 2007 Intervention. Success rates, achievements and attendances are always inflated to give a better impression of what is the real picture. A great deal of what appears in the popular press and lengthy reports to ministers is just departmental spin that is garnered from unverified reports and hearsay. There is also a culture of reporting on "model" communities that are not totally representative of the broader communities.

I hope that I have given you some things to think about. Thank you.

Alan Jeffrey Hockey

Experience in Northern Territory since August 2007 working with MacDonnell Shire @ Kaltukatjara and Mutitjulu. Barkley Shire 2009/2010 @ Ali Curung and Murray Downs. Wirrimanu since April, 2010.