To the Senate Community Affairs Committee

Regarding the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011

My name is Penca Rafiqi, I am a Graduate 2011 student from Griffith University, with a Bachelors degree in Australian Indigenous Contemporary Art, aiming to study a Post Graduate degree in Vocational Education.

For the past four years, I had the opportunity to connect with my Central Arrernte family and learn about the difficulties of segregation in the Northern Territory, and how Elders are being dismissed and undervalued in the community. I would like to propose an alternative solution to the current Northern Territory Intervention. Throughout my research of Traditional Cultural Australian Indigenous Law, the Elders were always consulted for ways and means, their knowledge was part of their accolade by all community members. European influences from the very early stages of colonising, have compromised the original people, this is based on not understanding Traditional Culture or how it relates to respecting individuals and environment. Research on communities throughout the time of colonising and so-called developement of Australian society has either been ignored or made into a quick fix band-aid solution. This is obvious to many educated individuals within and outside Australia. The powers that be, instigated the discrimination acts are condoning a segregated society. It is my intention to educate the adults, that will go on to teach the children, that there is a common denominator; we are all people, that should respect those that have reputedly proven to be knowledgeable and worthy of an opinion, "Elders". I do not mean politicians or local MP's, these individuals have power based on competiveness, lack of choices and dealings with corruption. I am not saying the originals inhabitants had no corrupt activities, much of the stories passed on to generation to generation, spoke of injustices and how the universal Law provided the answers, this was Elder Education. Stories told over time, through means of repitition, helped explain the facts. A story is better remembered than a fact.

I have read the "Little Children's Sacred Report", many times over. I have witnessed first hand of the differing laws for Australian Indignous communities over mainstream Australia, how Australia is not united. We need to be one, learn, understand and respect each other; do unto others as you would have them do to you. New Zealand has provided a great example of Maori Studies within the School system. The difference is, the view on Land. Land according to theTraditional Original People of Australia, is Not owned, it is based on custodianshop, just like our children. By understanding the land and its environmental influences you are better informed on how to live. this understanding knowledge is based on time; why Elders are so important in community. Communities survived by means of individual Elders that proved to be the best of that field, whether it be hunting or gathering or just common wise sense, knowing Universal Law.

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

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.

Penca Rafiqi