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1st February,2012.

Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee, regarding the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill, 2011.

My name is Rosemary Kinne. I am writing on behalf of the Dominican Justice and Peace Group, Sydney.

We wish to express our main concerns about the proposed Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill, 2011.

- Much of the Bill concentrates on punitive measures to restrict further the sale and purchase of alcohol to Aboriginal people. There is little recognition of the fact that most Aboriginal communities are 'dry'. Their problems arise from the sale and distribution of alcohol in the Northern Territory outside these 'dry' communities. Further complicated legislation and policing requirements will take away from the normal work of police and community workers without touching the causes.

- There is nothing in the legislation that recognizes or deals with the primary causes of addiction to alcohol among Northern Territorians of all ethnic origins. It could be argued that this is not the purpose of laws, but then legislators need to work out whether this Act is likely to make the situation worse.

- Although the RDA is supposedly lifted, most of this legislation targets Aboriginal people and reinforces the stereotypes that are common on both sides of parliament and in the wider society and opinion media.

- The sunset clause set at ten years is unnecessary. It is causing heartache among the elders and people working to keep their communities hopeful for a better future. It makes a mockery of the term 'NT Emergency Response'.

- The Government Evaluation Report on the Intervention has some valuable advice but many recommendations are not incorporated into this legislation. The international community will still question whether the Australian Governments is honouring its international obligations, in particular, *United Nations Charter of Human Rights*, Article 2 and *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People*, Articles 9 and 14.

- The Government has tried to consult, but it is still reliant on feedback from highly paid Government Business Managers(GBMs) rather than the traditional Aboriginal elders and community leaders. It has not been well served.

- 'One size fits all' is not a good policy, when dealing with education and health in rural areas, let alone in Aboriginal communities. The *Kimberley Fitzroy Crossing Foetal Alcohol Project* is a success, due to co-operation between community elders, FaHCSIA , local health workers and university researchers. This could be adapted to other places, given the right funding and goodwill. Legislation can provide the money; goodwill is a gift from those involved.

We believe that the Stronger Futures Act in its present form is not likely to make life happier for the majority of Aboriginal communities in the Northern territory.

Rosemary Kinne, 1st February, 2012,
on behalf of Dominican Justice and Peace Group, Sydney.