

16 May 2012

**Statement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegations to the United Nations:**

**National Congress of Australia's First Peoples  
Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services  
National Native Title Council  
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations**

The United Nations has heard significant criticisms from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegations over race-based laws currently being considered by the Australian Government.

The delegations are rejecting the argument of the Australian Government that the race laws are 'special measures' and are therefore not racially discriminatory.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which is currently in session at the UN Headquarters in New York, has been told that Australia is introducing new laws which treat Aboriginal people differently from all other Australians.

The Northern Territory 'Stronger Futures' Bills will extend the 5 year 'intervention' laws, which were first enacted in 2007, for another 10 years.

The original laws drew strong criticisms from the international human rights treaty bodies, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Aboriginal people are being subjected to 'blanket' prohibition of alcohol, 'blanket' income management regimes and government takeover of their lands, while the non-Indigenous people around them are free from these very same laws.

The government promised in 2010 that all new laws introduced into the Parliament would be examined to ensure compliance with Australia's international human rights obligations.

However the government is refusing to respond to calls for scrutiny of the Bills or to be accountable for introducing these race-based laws.

Times have changed, and it is time for the Australian Government to 'move on'.

Australia must stop the continuing 'framework of dominance' over the first peoples and honour its commitment to comply with its international human rights obligations.