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MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Senate must oppose deeply flawed Stronger Futures legislation**

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Ahead of the scheduled debate of the Stronger Future Bills, Amnesty International is calling on all senators to withdraw their support in light of the woefully inadequate consultation process and overwhelming opposition to the flawed legislation.

If passed, the Stronger Futures Bills represent the continued disempowerment of Aboriginal Peoples in the Northern Territory and the Government's blatant disregard for its human rights obligations.

The organisation has condemned the proposed legislation package to be debated in the Senate tomorrow as an extension of the discriminatory and punitive Northern Territory Intervention, which violates international human rights laws.

"The Government is poised to push through these laws and ignored the overwhelming opposition expressed by Aboriginal communities and advocates," said Rodney Dillon, Indigenous Rights spokesperson for Amnesty International.

Of more than 350 submissions made to the Senate Committee's inquiry into the legislation, the overwhelming majority opposed the legislation.

"The consultation process can only be described as an outright sham which in no way, shape or form met international standards for free, prior and informed consent.

"The people this affects did not have a say in their future and they feel very frustrated that no-one listened to them then and no-one is listening to them now. The very people who did not have say in this are the ones who have to live with this. This is history repeating itself and it is the Aboriginal Peoples who once again have to live with the consequences of these long term policies.

"Instead of working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities, the Government has simply rehashed past policies which do nothing to provide long-term solutions to systemic disadvantage," said Rodney Dillon.

The negative impact of the Intervention has been well documented over the past five years. Amnesty International has heard first-hand from Aboriginal Peoples in the Northern Territory about the extent of suffering that has occurred since the Intervention was rolled out.

"What's more, with very little proof that the measures being expanded or carried over from the Intervention are actually effective, Stronger Futures simply serves to undermine the successful community-driven initiatives led by Aboriginal communities themselves."

"Stronger Futures would set in stone for the next decade harmful policies that deny Aboriginal communities their basic human rights."

Amnesty International also remains concerned that the Bills fail to support the approximately 35 percent of Aboriginal Peoples in the Northern Territory who live on their traditional homelands.

“By concentrating investment into a small number of selected ‘growth towns’, a significant proportion of the Northern Territory’s population is being forced off their ancestral lands in order to access adequate housing and essential services.”

“The people we have been working with over the last four years on these homelands are saying that they are scared. They are worried that the services are not going to continue to their homelands and that they will be forced into hub towns. This is unacceptable and needs to be stopped.”