



# Edmund Rice Centre

## for Justice & Community Education

Awareness ♦ Advocacy ♦ Action

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**June 4, 2012**

### **Edmund Rice Centre supports Yolngu Elders Call: Stronger Futures Bill Should Be Rejected by Senate**

*The Yolngu Nations Assembly recently called on the Senate not to pass the Federal Government's Stronger Futures legislation, which will extend the NT intervention by up to a decade. Edmund Rice Centre (ERC) strongly supports the call of the Yolngu Elders and their opposition to the Australian Government's Stronger Futures Bills.*

"This statement from the Yolngu Elders is a powerful claim of their right as First Peoples and as citizens of Australia to self-determination in their own country", ERC Director Phil Glendenning said.

"The best and only way forward is through genuine partnerships between Indigenous communities and all levels of Government. The Yolngu Elders state that the Federal Government can achieve all its aims through partnership rather than the imposition of power from above".

"History has taught us that top-down, interventionist approaches have always failed. An extension of interventionist policies and a rejection of the Yolngu call for genuine partnership with Government, would once more take Australia down a very well-worn historically failed path", Mr Glendenning said.

"At some point in our history we have to put an end to the flawed belief that decisions that impact most on the lives of Indigenous communities in northern Australia are best made by Government employees in Canberra rather than by the people themselves", Mr Glendenning said.

"Rather than extending the Intervention, what is needed right now and more than ever is true engagement with Indigenous people as equals and partners, in a relationship based on principles of self-determination."

"The imposition of punitive measures from above such as blanket income management disempowers communities, stigmatises people in receipt of welfare assistance, and offers little prospect of long-term change. Alternatively, for example, the Yolngu are calling for a return to bilingual education thorough all levels of schooling as a means of addressing school enrolment and attendance.

Edmund Rice Centre strongly urges all Senators in the Australian Parliament to seriously examine the statement of the Yolngu Nations Assembly, to support it, and to reject the Stronger Futures Bills when they come before the Senate

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#### **Edmund Rice Centre for Justice & Community Education**

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