

Forest Hill & Vermont Uniting Churches Social Justice Group

The President,
Australian Government Senate,
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT 2600.

Dear Senator Hogg,

Re: **Stronger Futures Legislation.**

Greetings. We, the members of the Forest Hill & Vermont Uniting Churches Social Justice Group, write to express our deep concern over the proposed Stronger Futures legislation presently before the Senate.

We consider the legislation to be discriminatory, and to have been introduced without appropriate consultation, both in the introduction to the Intervention in 2007, and to the present legislation.

We urge the Senate to listen to the thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices that have been raised in resolute opposition to the discriminatory aspects of the legislation.

The proposed legislation, which extends for ten years, signals a dangerous return to paternalism. The reforms are punitive, and present a top-down approach that fails to address the real and very serious issues of disadvantage faced by the Indigenous communities. Banning alcohol, imposing harsh sentences for violation of bans, quarantining welfare payments, and suspending parents' income support based on their children's school attendance, shifts all responsibility for long term systemic issues onto the First Peoples themselves, in pursuit of short-term political 'point-scoring'. How many times have Indigenous leaders pleaded to work together with Government, but these have been ignored?

We ask that the Senate reject the legislation, and instead to seek reforms that support and further the reconciliation goals that lead to co-operative solutions.

Yours faithfully,

Alex Adam

On behalf of the Forest Hill & Vermont Uniting Churches Social Justice Group.

2 June, 2012