



## NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

### **Stronger Futures Destined to Fail: NSWALC**

*June 5, 2012*

The largest Aboriginal member-based organisation in the country has joined the growing chorus of voices calling on the federal government to abandon its proposed 10-year extension of the NT intervention.

The New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) has urged the government to abandon the top-down, paternalistic approach of the past, and work in true partnership with Aboriginal people.

Labor's Stronger Futures bills are currently before the Senate, and are expected to pass this month. The Australian Greens are the only party opposing the legislation.

If passed, the bills will continue many of the most contentious aspects of the NT intervention for another decade.

Earlier last month, the Yolngu Nations Assembly, made up of 8 Yolngu Nations from West, Central, and East Arnhem Land, sent a plea to Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Opposition Tony Abbott, urging them to re-consider the extension.

NSWALC Chairman Stephen Ryan says extending the intervention will not heal the deep hurt and distrust felt amongst NT communities.

"If the government truly wants to close the gap, it must work in direct partnership with Aboriginal people," Chairman Ryan said.

"The government says it has consulted with prescribed communities. But there are very serious reservations about whether they have properly obtained the free, prior and informed consent of people on the ground.

Mr Ryan also expressed concern over the government's continual refusal to commit the draft laws to examination against Australia's human rights obligations.

"There's absolutely no reason why these draft laws cannot go before the human rights committee.

“If they comply with the Racial Discrimination Act as Minister Macklin keeps saying, then why baulk at the review?”

“There has already been six years of intervention, and this billion dollar policy is still light on outcomes and evidence.

“It’s unclear how extending a clearly discriminatory policy will help solve the deep-rooted issues within NT communities.”

Mr Ryan said the government’s plans to extend parts of the intervention – the compulsory income management scheme to other parts of the nation, including New South Wales, should concern Aboriginal people throughout the country.

“If these laws pass, income management will be rolled out in places like Bankstown in Sydney. Income management is a proven failure, and having it rolled out across NSW is a huge concern of the NSWALC,” Mr Ryan said.

“It’s time we stood with our brothers and sisters to call for the right to control our own affairs.”

Mr Ryan said it was time for the federal government to abandon the intervention and work on a truly stronger future - one where Aboriginal people are directly involved.