



## **Socialist Alliance statement in solidarity with the Yolngu Nations Assembly**

The Socialist Alliance stands in solidarity with the Yolngu Nations Assembly in its unequivocal rejection of federal Labor's Stronger Futures bills.

This proposed legislation continues the trauma of invasion, dispossession, paternalism, neglect and cultural destruction that Australia's First Nations have withstood since colonisation began in 1788.

The 2007 NT Intervention, and its proposed continuation under Stronger Futures, is at the cutting edge of a bipartisan neoliberal assault on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This legislation will be voted on in the context of an ongoing ban on bilingual education in the NT and nationwide "tough on crime" approaches to social problems that see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders disproportionately sent to prison.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders continue their strong and inspiring resistance to such attacks - through the recent ongoing Tent Embassy protests in various states, the vocal opposition to Stronger Futures at the shambolic 2011 community consultations, and the ongoing organised opposition, through the Yolngu Nations Assembly and campaigning groups around the country.

Labor talks up Stronger Futures as part of the national Closing the Gap framework - but that very framework falls strictly within a neoliberal push to "mainstream" Aboriginal communities, focusing on home ownership, (English-only) school attendance, "economic participation" and an end to "welfare dependency".

Federal Labor is systematically weakening and undermining the welfare system, an attack on all welfare recipients. At the same time, Stronger Futures - under the guise of encouraging economic development and shifting people from welfare to work - will take more control away from the already disempowered. This will lead to more - not less - dependence.

Rather than investing in real, meaningful, community-based employment, Stronger Futures and associated policies will use welfare measures such as income management to punish Aboriginal people.

Rather than asking why children and communities are increasingly disengaged from schools (as bilingual education disappears), or resourcing community participation and control of education, Stronger Futures will cut the welfare of parents whose children fail to meet arbitrary attendance benchmarks.

The Socialist Alliance pledges our continued solidarity to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We condemn the government's top-down approach which will further disempower some of Australia's most disadvantaged communities. These communities experience rates of imprisonment, disease and mortality not seen elsewhere in the developed world.

There will be no stronger futures without self-determination, and no reconciliation without justice.