



# World Council of Churches

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**To:** The Honorable Julia Gillard, Prime  
Minister of Australia and  
Members of her Government

Geneva, 11 June 2012

The World Council of Churches appeals to the Government of Australia to respect the wishes of the Yolngu Nations Assembly as they call on government not to pursue its interventionist policies, and to foster a spirit of partnership based on the principles of Self-Determination.

The World Council of Churches has always advocated for the rights of communities of Indigenous Peoples in many parts of the world to live on their traditional lands, assert their identities, and maintain their cultures and traditions.

In September 2010, a team of representatives from the WCC visited the Aboriginal People communities in the Northern Territory of Australia. During the visit, the team urged the Australian government to end the "Intervention" and instead to engage in proper consultation and negotiation processes which are genuinely inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples, which will better empower and enable them to identify their own aspirations, issues of concern and which will involve their full participation in creating and implementing solutions. The Team said, "We do not believe that extending the Intervention under the Stronger Futures legislation, as is currently proposed, will lead to equality and self-determination which is the right of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples".

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at its meeting in Geneva 16-22 February, 2011 too urged the Australian government to ensure that policies affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples comply with international conventions and, in particular, conform to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labour Organization's Covenant 169.

In that same spirit, the WCC once again makes this appeal not to pass the legislation of the Stronger Futures Northern Territory Bill 2011. The WCC joins its concerns with those of the Churches in Australia. We believe that social inclusion does not come through policies of intervention but through respect and by enabling self-determination and partnership.

With best regards,

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit  
General Secretary