



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

2 May 2012

STATEMENT BY SNAICC CHAIRPERSON DAWN WALLAM

SNAICC stands in solidarity with Yolŋu Nations Assembly

SNAICC stands in solidarity with the Yolŋuw Makarr Dhuni (Yolŋu Nations Assembly) of Western, Central and East Arnhem Land.

The Yolŋu Nations have called on the Senate to discard in full the Stronger Futures package of bills that, if enacted, would extend the intervention in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities for 10 years.

SNAICC agrees with this unambiguous position.

In our submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee, SNAICC recommended that the legislation be completely redeveloped in accordance with international human rights laws to which Australia is bound.

Some of the basic human rights that SNAICC considers are not fully reflected in the Stronger Futures bills are the right to self-determination and the right for communities to give their free, prior and informed consent to measures that may affect them.

These are the same principles that the Yolŋu Nations are asking the Australian and Northern Territory governments to uphold — and to work in meaningful partnership with Aboriginal communities to arrive at effective long-term solutions.

The Yolŋu Nations are highly critical of the consultation process on the Stronger Futures legislation — and again they are not alone.

In its report on the legislation, the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee noted “with serious concern the degree of confusion, and frustration expressed in relation to the Stronger Futures consultations.”

SNAICC argues the proposed bills do not adequately respond to the serious and complex issues around child protection that were cited as the rationale for the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response. Nor do the bills come to grips with underlying problems of alcoholism, violence, poverty and generational trauma.

The proposed Stronger Futures package is a far cry from the holistic, culturally-appropriate and integrated measures recommended in the 2007 *Children are Sacred* report that instigated the Australian Government’s intervention.

SNAICC trusts that, in its deliberations, the Australian Parliament will give due consideration to the issues highlighted by the Yolŋu Nations, among many others.

For more information: Frank Hytten, SNAICC CEO, on (0432) 345 652;

**SNAICC: The national peak body for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander children**