



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE  
OF MELBOURNE

# media release

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## **Yolŋu Nations reject “Stronger Futures proposed Legislation”**

The Yolŋu Makarr Dhuni, an assembly of eight nations in the Western, Central and East Arnhem Land areas of the Northern Territory, have released a statement rejecting the Federal Government’s Stronger Futures legislation.

Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Melbourne (ACMM) supports the recent statement by the *Nations of the Yolŋuw Makarr Dhunni (Yolŋu Nations Assembly)* of the Western, Central and Eastern Arnhem Land areas, Northern Territory.

The Government has received 454 submissions to the Senate Community Affairs committee’s inquiry into the Bills. The vast majority of submissions, which included Aboriginal peoples and organisations, community groups, Churches, human rights groups, welfare groups and individuals, strongly opposed measures, rejected the Bills, or asked for its withdrawal. More than 35,000 people have signed the Stand for Freedom petition. Other Traditional owners have also made strong statements. Yet the Government is ignoring all this informed opposition and is pushing through its own agenda to pass the Stronger Futures legislation.

Mrs Vicki Clark, Co-ordinator of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry says, “It is clear the Yolŋu do not want the Intervention under any name and are calling for changes in policy directions, partnership with Government and the return of control over their lives, communities and lands. The disrespect shown to Traditional Aboriginal Governance structures and Traditional Custodians has been staggering and is set to worsen under the proposed Stronger Futures legislation.”

The Yolŋu Assembly are also asking all NT Traditional Owners to refuse to participate in land lease negotiations and approval of exploration licenses until the Government throws out the Stronger Futures legislation. In doing this the Yolŋu Nations are clearly stating they have had enough of being pressured to agree to things that are negatively impacting their communities.

Mrs Vicki Clark said today, “I believe a review of the relationship between the Australian Government and the NT Land Councils is critical to gain the confidence of the people they represent. If Land Councils are under pressure to be the conduits of Government agendas it needs to stop.”

“The legislation is due to be debated in the senate in May and I sincerely hope the Australian Government hears what the Yolŋu Nations are saying to them. They need to commit to a real partnership with Aboriginal peoples to develop sustainable solutions.”

