



Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney Archdiocese



Media Statement

Yolŋu Nations reject “Stronger Futures”

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. Graeme Mundine, Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney Archdiocese has welcomed the statement.

Mr Mundine said “The statement by the Yolŋu Nations Assembly cannot be any clearer. The Yolŋu have consistently asked for partnership and self-determination, not intervention and discrimination. The Yolŋu peoples do not want disempowering relationships with Government.

“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.

“In many ways the Yolŋu Nations and other NT Nations are the last frontier for the newcomers to this Land. But as we have already experienced on the East Coast, their language, cultures and Law are increasingly under threat as interventionist policies combined with the relentless push to mine Aboriginal Land place more and more pressure on communities.

“I also support the Yolŋu Nations’ call for a review of the relationship between the Australian Government and the NT Land Councils. These organisations must have 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 Government seems to have its head in the sand over this *Stronger Futures* legislation. They received over 450 submissions to the Senate Community Affairs committee’s inquiry into the Bills. The majority of submissions, which included Aboriginal peoples and organisations, community groups, Churches, human rights groups, welfare groups and individuals, rejected the Bills. 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.

“I sincerely hope the Australian Government hears what the Yolŋu Nations are saying to them. They need to throw out this flawed legislation and instead commit to real partnership with Aboriginal peoples to develop sustainable solutions”. Mr Mundine concluded.