



**Response to the Statement of the Yolnu Nations Assembly in Arnhem Land**

**regarding the Stronger Futures Bills and Northern Territory Policies**

**Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea**

ABN 42 931 784 103

**Institute Centre**  
1 Thomas Street  
Lewisham NSW 2049  
Tel: 02 9564 1911  
Fax: 02 9550 9683  
Email:  
institute@ismapng.org.au

The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea supports the Statement of the Yolnu Nations Assembly in Arnhem Land which calls on both the *'Australian Federal and Northern Territory Governments to end their interventionist policies and agendas, and return to a mindset of partnership based on the principles of Self-Determination'*.

Sister Annette Schneider RSM, spokeswoman for the Institute of more than 900 Sisters of Mercy, joins with all people of good-will who seek an end to the intervention policies in the Northern Territory.

The Stronger Futures Bill (and those associated) which is not supported by the Yolnu Nations will soon come before the Senate. "We hope that each Senator will genuinely consider the legislation and its impact before they vote on the Bill" said Sister Annette.

The Institute supports the call of the Yolnu Nations for a review of the relationship between the Australian Federal Government and the Land Councils of the Northern Territory and for an end to the Northern Territory Government's Compulsory Teaching in English for the First Four Hours of Each School Day policy. Education in Yolnu languages is a necessary and valued component of schooling.

It is critical that any policies or legislation:

- Respect culture, lands and languages;
- Acknowledge current educational and health status in communities;
- Support the human rights of all; and
- Offer realistic hope, support empowerment and not lead to further frustration and despair.

The Sisters of Mercy urge the Australian government to determine a better way forward through the development of genuine partnerships with Indigenous Peoples.

*"If we are citizens together in this country, lifting up one flag, each calling Australia our home, then we must work with respect. Respect for our land, our law, and our language."* Djunadjuna Yunupinu, Dalkarramirr for the Gumatj Nation

Sister Annette Schneider RSM  
Vicar, Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

May 4, 2012

**Administration Offices**

**Northern**  
263 Agnes Street  
Rockhampton Qld 4700  
Ph: 07 4927 1866  
Fax: 07 4922 3040

**Central**  
20 Union Street  
Tighes Hill NSW 2297  
Ph: 02 4940 8325  
Fax: 02 4940 8569

**Southern**  
720 Heidelberg Road  
Alphington Vic 3078  
Ph: 03 9499 1577  
Fax: 03 9499 3897