



Media Release

2 May, 2012

St Vincent de Paul Society respectfully supports Yolngu Elders

St Vincent de Paul Society National Council CEO, Dr John Falzon, issued the following statement in response to the Statement released this morning by Elders of the Yolngu Nations Assembly in Arnhem Land:

“The Elders of the Yolngu Nations Assembly today issued an historical statement regarding the Australian Government’s Stronger Futures Bills.

“Their words are born from a strong and positive vision for Australia.

“All of us, especially those elected as legislators, have a duty to listen to these words and to take heed of their rejection of the Stronger Futures Bills.

“They have called for an end to interventionist policies and a return to partnership based on the principles of self-determination.

“They state that the Federal Government can achieve all its aims through partnership rather than the imposition of power from above.

“They speak with authority and their message is one that emerges from their collective wisdom and experience.

“Common sense tells us that you don’t build a community up by putting its people down.

“We cannot learn what is right if we fail to listen to what is wrong.

“They have called, for example, for an appropriate reinstatement of bilingual education through all levels of schooling. This, rather than a punitive approach, is central to how we should be addressing the important issue of school enrolment and attendance.

“The St Vincent de Paul Society respectfully acknowledges and supports the Statement of the Elders of the Yolngu Nations Assembly and calls on the Australian Government to do likewise.”