



**Whitehorse Friends For Reconciliation Inc.**

A Member of the **ANTaR** Network

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## **Stronger Futures (SF) legislation is ‘No Future’**

**‘Stronger’ call by Northern Aboriginal Elders to discard Stronger Futures legislation package.**

*Whitehorse Friends for Reconciliation* is one of many small community groups which regularly gather to discuss ways of enhancing reconciliation and respectful relationships between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians. We work through local community awareness-raising, and through lobbying members of all parliaments, both state and federal.

Groups like ours have been shocked by the very discriminatory legislation imposed on communities in the Northern Territory under the *Intervention*. We are even more appalled that there should be any consideration of extending similar legislation, under the guise of the ‘Stronger Futures’ Bill (SF) currently before the Senate.

Last week Aboriginal representatives of the Yolŋu Nations Assembly– (YNA) met at Ramingining 560kms East of Darwin to discuss SF Bills. They released a statement rejecting the bills. In this statement the YNA is calling for a change in Government policy directions and mindset. We urge you to read it at [www.concernedaustralians.com.au](http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au)

Dalkarramirr (delegated senior leader) of the Gumatj Nation, Yunipiju Djuŋadjuŋa adds in the Appendix of the statement,

*“If we are citizens together in this country, lifting up one flag, each calling Australia home then we must work with respect. Respect for ourselves, our land, our law and our language.”*

There can be No Future in the proposed SF legislation as it disregards the views of Aboriginal people, their leaders and governance structures. Respect includes recognition that Indigenous Australians as the traditional owners –with deep connection to their lands – have the right to be involved in policy formation from the outset.

The SF process has failed to truly listen to the people. Stronger Futures (like the first Intervention) imposes unwanted policies and ignores numerous articles of UNDRIP the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) which Australia

supported in 2009. No amount of expenditure - claimed to be \$ 2 billion – can cover up these fundamental failings.

*Whitehorse Friends for Reconciliation (WFFR)* acknowledges the Yolŋu Nations Assembly in their struggle, and supports their statement, which begins:

***1. The Yolŋu Nations reject the Stronger Futures Bill (and those associated) and call on the Senate to discard these Bills in full. We have clearly informed you that we do not support the legislation.***

***The Australian Federal Government can achieve all its aims through partnership in our communities. They have no need to grant themselves continued and new powers contained within these Bills.***

***2. Until the Stronger Futures Bill (and those associated) are thrown out of the Australian Federal Parliament the Yolŋu nations call on all traditional owners across the Northern Territory to refuse:***

- a) Participation in land lease negotiations with the Australian Federal Parliament, and***
- b) approval for any exploration licences.***

WFFR asks the Government also to honour their commitment to the UNDRIP and human rights principles.

The legislation is due to be debated in the senate in May. We call on the leaders of our country and each Senator to personally read the Makarr Dhunni (Yolŋu Nations Assembly) statement, and

- listen to the words of the people
- view or read the 2011 NT consultations and Senate Hearing transcripts available at [www.concernedaustralians.com.au](http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au) and to,
- *discard the Stronger Futures legislation.*

“That one day all Australians will respect and acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the traditional owners of this land of Australia. That all Australians will live together in justice, harmony and with respect for one another.” (WFFR- Vision Statement)