



## Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly

### Media Release

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#### **Federal Government should heed Yolngu voices**

The Uniting Church in Australia has welcomed a statement by the Yolngu Nations Assembly that rejects any further extension of the Northern Territory Intervention.

“The best and only way forward for Indigenous Australians is through genuine partnerships between communities and all levels of Government,” said President of the Uniting Church in Australia’s National Assembly Rev. Alistair Macrae.

“When self-determination is side-lined any progress for our First Peoples is an illusion.”

The Yolngu Nations Assembly has called on the Senate not to pass the Federal Government’s *Stronger Futures* legislation, which will extend the NT intervention by up to a decade.

Moderator of the Uniting Church’s Northern Synod Mr Stuart McMillan said, “Rather than continuing the Intervention’s current approach, what is needed more than ever is true engagement with Indigenous people as equals and partners.”

“How many more decades of policy failure do Aboriginal people in the Territory have to endure before Canberra learns the lesson that the only way forward is together? An extension of the Intervention only perpetuates their disempowerment.”

The *Stronger Futures* legislation is likely to come before the Senate when Federal Parliament resumes next week for the Budget.

The National Director of Uniting Justice Australia Rev. Elenie Poulos has called on the Federal Government to honour its commitment to a genuine partnership with the First Peoples.

“We repeat many of our previous calls to the Federal Government to live up to the promises it has made to all Australians to work with the First Peoples,” said Rev. Poulos.

“Top-down, interventionist approaches have always failed. The current blanket imposition of income management disempowers communities. It stigmatises rather than supports recipients of welfare assistance.”

“We are also deeply concerned with the Government’s determination to proceed with the SEAM program as part of the *Stronger Futures* package,” said Rev. Poulos.

“Withdrawing income support payments from parents whose children are not attending school is overly punitive and fails to address the real issues of disadvantage faced by young people in Indigenous communities.”