

MEDIA RELEASE



Monday 5 March, 2012

SENATE COMMITTEE APPROVES STRONGER FUTURES DESPITE GROWING OPPOSITION

The Senate Committee charged with reviewing the Stronger Futures Bills has supported the passage of the controversial legislation despite widespread community concern about its coercive measures.

“ANTaR is very concerned that community support for these far-reaching and long-term measures has not been obtained. In the absence of consent, these bills must be withdrawn,” said Jacqueline Phillips, ANTaR National Director.

“Despite strong public opposition, the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee last night delivered a majority report which supported passage of the Stronger Futures bills with only minor amendments.”

The Committee has recognised that the Government consultation process was flawed, noting “with serious concern the degree of confusion, and frustration expressed in relation to the Stronger Futures consultations”.

“The minor changes proposed by the Committee will not correct the serious flaws in the consultation process.”

“The Committee has presented concrete recommendations for improving future consultations. It is now time for the Government to improve its consultation process and reopen dialogue with affected communities on the Stronger Futures measures.”

“Amendments proposed by the Committee will improve the package of measures but they do not go far enough.”

The Committee has registered serious concerns about the proposed alcohol penalties and recommended the use of infringement notices.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are now eighteen times more likely to be in prison than their non-Indigenous counterparts. It is vital that measures which would exacerbate this epidemic of incarceration are removed immediately.”

“The Committee has joined ANTaR in expressing reservations about the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM). It should be of concern to all Australians that major changes to social security are being proposed despite the Committee finding “little evidence from stakeholders that supported current measures to address school non-attendance.”

“Despite overwhelming evidence for the success of community-led development from the Northern Territory and across the world, the Australian Greens’ dissenting report stands alone in calling for an end to imposing punitive measures on affected communities.”

ANTaR’s submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee’s Inquiry can be found at: <http://bit.ly/ANTaRStrongerFuturesSubmission>

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