



Tuesday 20 March 2012

Embargoed until: Wednesday 21 March 2012

33,000 AUSTRALIANS OPPOSE STRONGER FUTURES BILLS

The Stand For Freedom campaign, created by Our Generation in partnership with ANTaR, will on Wednesday deliver a petition to the Senate signed by 33,000 Australians. The petition urges the Australian Government to withdraw the controversial Stronger Futures legislation, expected to be debated in the Senate this week.

“Since we launched the campaign three weeks ago, there has been an outpouring of public support for its clear message: that this legislation has been created without the consent of Aboriginal people in the NT, and that it goes against their wishes for more control over their own lives. Tens of thousands of Australians are now calling for these bills to be withdrawn immediately,” said Damien Curtis, Campaign Director.

“After 5 years of the failed Northern Territory Intervention, Aboriginal communities are at breaking point and cannot withstand 10 more years of top-down policy-making that disregards their human rights. It’s time for a new policy direction from the Government, in true partnership with Aboriginal people,” Mr Curtis said.

The report of the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry was released last week. It recommended minor changes be made to the legislation, with only the Greens dissenting. However, many in the health, welfare and human rights sectors have expressed outrage that the report did not reflect the many specific concerns about the legislation outlined in more than 450 submissions to the Senate Committee.

“Many of the solutions proposed by Aboriginal communities to improve governance, alcohol management and education were ignored, as was the widespread opposition to key measures such as compulsory income management,” said Jacqueline Phillips, ANTaR National Director.

The report made no mention of the key demand by the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples that the bill be tested for human rights compliance.

“Australia can do better than this. It’s time for a new approach based on respect, partnership, community-driven development and evidence,” said Ms Phillips.

The online campaign continues to roll out across the country, and gathers more support every day. Popular musicians such as John Butler and Archie Roach have already joined in, and are helping to generate a widespread movement for change. Aboriginal country music legend Jimmy Little has also written a letter addressed to the Australian music industry, encouraging them to support the campaign.

Media contact:

Damien Curtis, Stand For Freedom Director: 0420 400 284

Jacqueline Phillips, ANTaR National Director: 0423 773 395

Campaign website: www.standforfreedom.org.au