

### **Uniting Church calls on Senators not to pass *Stronger Futures* legislation**

The Uniting Church's justice unit UnitingJustice Australia has written to Senators urging them to reject the *Stronger Futures* legislation scheduled for debate in the Senate today.

National Director of UnitingJustice Rev. Elenie Poulos expressed her concern that the legislation, which renews and extends conditions of the NT Intervention, is being pushed through 'under the radar' in Budget Week without adequate consultation with Indigenous people.

"The Uniting Church has long advocated that appropriate consultations must take place with Australia's First Peoples before these laws go through parliament," said Rev. Poulos.

"We want justice for our First Peoples, and we want evidence-based policy measures that empower communities."

"The *Stronger Futures* legislation is built on short-term solutions to systemic problems.

"The reforms are overly punitive and have rightly been opposed by thousands of Australians over the last six months."

"Pushing this legislation through in Budget Week will mean the many issues tied up in this legislation will not get adequate public scrutiny."

The Moderator of the Uniting Church's Northern Synod, Stuart McMillan has joined thousands of Indigenous Territorians in calling for true engagement and partnership in policy formation.

"When Canberra politicians decide to get out of the Parliament, sit down with Indigenous Territorians and listen, then and only then will there be the opportunity for positive change through policy developed in partnership."

Rev. Poulos and Mr. McMillan both pointed to the punitive and counter-productive measures in *Stronger Futures*: overly-harsh punishments for breaching alcohol bans, quarantining welfare payments, and suspension of income support based on a child's school attendance.

"These are an extension of the top-down approaches we witnessed during the Intervention - approaches that have failed to improve outcomes for Indigenous communities. These are simply not sustainable, long-term solutions," said Rev. Poulos and Mr. McMillan.

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