

Women's Web – stories actions

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## Submissions to Stronger Futures Enquiry

25<sup>th</sup> January 2012

At Women's Web – stories actions we wish to support the ANTaR submission re Centrelink payments. We also believe

'the existing topdown policy environment must be replaced by a community-centred approach if Aboriginal people are to develop the capabilities necessary to govern their own communities well.'p66

If you substitute 'women' for 'Aboriginal people' you have a situation similar to that which existed in the 1980's when we were fighting for women to have greater control over their lives and a greater say over and involvement in the decisions that affect them.

We were concerned then about the effects of topdown welfare.

We submit these two examples of some of the problems we had then with topdown welfare – or social security as it was euphemistically called then:

*Vashti Spring '81: 'In the small print of the budget we find another attack on the lives of women. Women will be refused unemployment benefits if their spouses are involved in industrial action or when their spouses have been refused unemployment benefits, or had it cancelled or postponed. ... Women must continue to fight back – and can, by becoming involved in women's mobilization.'*

*State Library of Victoria taken from -  
Women Working Together suffrage and onwards  
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~women> -  
Chapter 15 – The Broader Women's Movement  
Section 25..WOMEN AND WELFARE: Fight the Welfare Cuts*

And from one unemployed young woman at the time:

To be unemployed means more than not having a job  
It means to be labelled useless, a leech on society  
It means to be a number, an inhuman number  
It means to be pushed around,  
going from place to place, office to office  
It means to justify to a computer that  
you have made attempts to find a job  
It often means isolation and loneliness  
It means to never have money to spare  
It means boredom, nothing to do and nowhere to go  
It means becoming apathetic to everyone and everything  
It is not a life one chooses to live.

*Jenny Rimmer 1982 Women's Web – stories actions [www.womensweb.com.au](http://www.womensweb.com.au) Dialogue page*

We believe little has changed since then, making it all the more urgent that this opportunity not be wasted.

Thank you,

Geraldine Robertson  
Secretary  
Women's Web – stories actions