

23rd November 2023

Dear Standing Committee on Community Affairs References Committee,

RE: Inquiry into the Social Security (Administration) (Enhanced Income Management Regime – State Referrals and Commonwealth Referrals and Exemptions) Determinations 2023

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to your inquiry. I make this brief submission drawing on over 9 years of research experience examining Compulsory Income Management in Australia and twenty years experience working on development issues in Australia and internationally. This submission reiterates the ongoing concerns I have long raised regarding compulsory income management in submissions from 2017 to the present.

This submission will focus on the compulsory and nonvoluntary income management aspects of the Regime (State Referrals Determination and the Commonwealth Referrals Determination) – which I will refer to both as compulsory income management.

Earlier this year, I provided a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Inquiry into the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Bill 2023. In this submission I wrote that I did not support the Bill as it makes Compulsory Income Management a permanent fixture in the Australian Social Security landscape. There is no sunset clause in the legislation, and the Bill gives the Minister power to extend the use of Compulsory Income Management to other locations beyond those already subject to the measure. Further, peer reviewed research has also shown that Compulsory Income Management causes more harm than good, and the government has never provided an evidence base to show otherwise. These issues continue to be a major concern for the current compulsory income management regime.

Locking people into CIM is a serious breach of human rights. We now have a situation where some people in the Northern Territory who were put on BasicsCard as part of the Northern Territory Intervention may still find themselves still on CIM 16 years later. In some cases, their whole adult life has been lived under government controlled CIM regimes. The regime has also long been imbued with racial discrimination through the disproportionate targeting of First Nations people.

The current determinations do not address these ongoing and foundational issues with Compulsory Income Management. Further the new so called Enhanced Income Management Program raises further issues, specifically,

- There are very opaque processes for individuals subjected to the program to appeal decisions and no clear way to exit the program.
- How the program is being evaluated and monitored is particularly troubling considering the inability of the department to show any

proof of concept with other compulsory income management programs

- The promised community consultation of this new scheme has been very poor at best – and consistently overlooks Aboriginal controlled organisations and their expertise when it comes to CIM in the Northern Territory. Instead of centring to the voices of First Nations people, the program constantly sidelines their critical points.

Recommendations

1. The government ends Compulsory Income Management in Australia.
2. That enhanced Income Management (eIM) and other CIM regimes transition to a voluntary “opt in” regime with no provision to refer participants to any forms of Compulsory Income Management.

Sincerely,

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