

Inquiry into the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Measures) Bill 2015

SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE

The National Council of Women of Australia is pleased to have the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry

NCWA is a national non-government umbrella organisation with broadly humanitarian and educational objectives, which seeks to raise the awareness of women and girls to their rights and responsibilities as citizens and to encourage the participation of women in all aspects of community life. We work with, and across all sectors, to identify and bring about change to ensure that there is equity and security for all in Australia.

NCWA is concerned at the proposed changes to the Social Services Legislative Amendment (Family Measure) Bill 2015, particularly in the area of proposed cuts to family allowances and the intention to remove the supplementary payments to larger families. Taken in conjunction with other proposed cuts to the Family Tax Benefits part A and B any reduction in payments will impact on larger families on low incomes. The intention that the savings be redirected to child care is not valid when you consider that child care applies to children under five years. Any family with primary and secondary school children will not receive any benefit at all from the shift in funding.

Much has been made of the premise that families spend less per child when there is a large family than a small family. The assumption that there will be "hand-me-downs" and recycling is not always so – take a family with three teenage boys and a 6 year old girl – not much in the recycling hand me down bag there for the fourth child. Larger families need larger more expensive cars to move the family around – additional costs not often taken into account. Every payment helps families, particularly single parent families trying to manage on a low wage. People on low incomes are very good managers of money and they do a lot better than perhaps families on a higher disposable income. There is also less left at the end of the week and taking any money from these families will drive them deeper into poverty

There has been no evidence presented as to how many families will be affected by these changes and how many families will actually benefit. Therefore it is impossible to justify such changes without much more information.

NCWA opposes these changes and would hope that they would be blocked again when they are presented to the Senate.

On the issue of portability of family benefits and the reduction from 56 weeks to six weeks, we do not have a position on this as there has been no information as to the effect this will have and on whom.

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