



Woodville COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

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Tuesday 1 February 2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Submission to Senate Community Affairs Committee re Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011 and two related bills

Woodville Community Services Incorporated is a member of the **Say No to Income Management Not in Bankstown, Not Anywhere Coalition**. Other key coalition members include the Arab Council of Australia, the Western Sydney Community Forum, Metro Migrant Resource Centre, Bankstown Area Multicultural Network and Aunty Carol Carter local Aboriginal elder.

The **Say No to Income Management Not in Bankstown, Not Anywhere Coalition** opposes compulsory income management. We specifically oppose the trial of compulsory income management in Bankstown, which would be enabled by the proposed Bills.

In July 2011 the **Say No to Income Management Not in Bankstown, Not Anywhere Coalition** published an Open Letter opposing compulsory income management in local newspapers in Bankstown. Our Open Letter, which is attached, summarises the key reasons why we oppose compulsory income management and has been endorsed by a wide range of 54 organisations including unions and community services and religious organisations. A full list of the 54 organisations which to date have endorsed our Open Letter is below.

- Arab Council Australia Inc.
- Association of Bhanin El-Minieh
- Australian Arab Business Network
- Australian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Alliance
- Bankstown Area Multicultural Network
- Bankstown Community Resource Group
- Bankstown Women's Health Centre
- Cabramatta Community Centre
- CatholicCare
- Combined Pensioners and Superannuants of NSW
- Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union, NSW Branch
- Council of Social Service of NSW
- Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation
- Ethnic Child Care Family and Community Services Co-op
- Ethnic Communities Council of NSW
- Finance Sector Union NSW/ACT Branch
- Fairfield Local Aboriginal Access Group

- Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
- Gandangara Local Aboriginal Council
- Granville Multicultural Community Centre
- Greek Orthodox Community of NSW
- Greenacre Area Neighbourhood Centre Inc.
- Green Left Weekly
- Immigration Advocacy and Services Network
- Inner South-West Community Development Organisation Ltd
- Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, Research Unit (UTS)
- Lebanese Community Council of NSW
- Lebanese Moslem Association
- Maritime Union of Australia, Sydney Branch
- Metro Migrant Resource Centre
- National Association of Community Legal Centres Inc.
- National Tertiary Education Union, NSW
- Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia Inc.
- NSW Nurses Association
- Olivetree Women's Network
- Pacific Island Women Advocate Support Service
- Presentation Sisters Queensland
- Public Service Association NSW
- St Vincent De Paul National Council of Australia
- Sisters of St Joseph SA Reconciliation Circle
- Society of Australian Presentation Sisters' Justice group
- South West Community Legal Centre
- Stop the Intervention Collective
- Tri Community Exchange
- United Muslim Women Association
- United Voice
- UnitingCare NSW.ACT
- Unions NSW
- Welfare Rights Centre, Sydney
- Western Sydney Community Forum
- Western Sydney Regional Information & Research Service (WESTIR)
- Woodville Community Services
- Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) Inc.
- Working Group for Aboriginal Rights, Canberra

In August 2011 the **Say No to Income Management Not in Bankstown, Not Anywhere Coalition** called for a Moratorium on Income Management. The call for a Moratorium is being supported by a petition which will be presented to the Senate after its closing date on 1 April 2012. The petition calls for the government to:

1. *Abandon plans to expand Income Management to the five 'trial sites' in 2012, including Bankstown in south-west Sydney;*
2. *Grant immediate amnesty to all people seeking to exit Income Management in the NT, Western Australia and Queensland;*
3. *Redirect spending planned for Income Management into employment creation and social services.*

Our campaign website www.sayno2gim.info/ details the range of public meetings and other actions the campaign coalition has organised. These include:-

- a Day of Action in July 2011 where hundreds of local residents and organisations faxed local Commonwealth Government members, Jason Clare and Daryl Melham and Tanya Plibersek, the then Minister for Human Services and Social Inclusion expressing their opposition to compulsory income management;
- A rally in Paul Keating Park followed by a street march on 8 October 2011. This was addressed by Aboriginal activist Barbara Shaw from the Northern Territory, local Aboriginal elders, local residents and representatives of local organisations. Around 150 people attended this rally, which was reported in the local and state media;
- Two public meetings in October and November 2011 which were addressed by Dr John Falzon, CEO of St Vincent de Paul National Council and Eva Cox, sociologist. These meetings were well attended and reported in the local and state media; and
- A visit to the Northern Territory in October 2011 by two workers of organisations that are members of the campaign coalition, Randa Kattan and Semra Guler. This visit allowed the campaign members to hear first-hand how compulsory income management was experienced by people living in the Territory.

Pam Batkin

Executive Officer and

Member of the Say No to Income Management, Not in Bankstown, Not Anywhere Coalition



to Government's Income Management **Not in Bankstown, Not Anywhere!**

OPEN LETTER

To Ministers Tanya Plibersek and Jenny Macklin and to local Federal Members of Banks, Blaxland and Watson

We the undersigned are opposed to the Federal government's Income Management. We are very concerned about proposals made during the federal budget in May to expand a system of Income Management into Bankstown and four other sites around Australia.

This system 'quarantines' between 50-70 per cent of Centrelink payments onto a BasicsCard that can only be used to buy 'priority items' at government approved stores. In Bankstown, it will be applied to people against their will who have been referred by child protection authorities or deemed 'vulnerable to financial crisis'. Bonuses will be offered to people who join 'voluntarily'.

We believe this approach is short sighted and bad public policy. A system which dehumanises and punitively micromanages a person's below the poverty line income does not ensure that children are protected from harm nor does it stop people gambling, experiencing mental health problems or homelessness.

We know about the shame, humiliation and hardship caused by Income Management in Aboriginal communities living under the Northern Territory Intervention. The United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has condemned this measure as a breach of fundamental human rights.

There is no evidence that Income Management is leading to improved outcomes for welfare recipients. The Menzies School of Health reported in May 2010 that Income Management had not led to increases in sales of fresh fruit and vegetables in NT community stores, although a sharp spike was recorded when incomes temporarily increased through the government stimulus package in 2009.

Income Management is a gross waste of funds. \$117.5 million has been budgeted to roll the system out into the five new 'trial sites', including Bankstown, at an estimated cost of \$4,600 per person per year.

This money is badly needed to raise incomes above the poverty line and provide services and employment opportunities that can actually support struggling people and indeed ensure sustainable outcomes.

We are concerned that the category 'vulnerable to financial crisis' is extremely subjective and is being made on discriminatory grounds. 98 per cent of people in the NT deemed 'vulnerable' have been Indigenous. We fear a similar impact on already marginalised groups within our own community.

We are concerned about the arbitrary selection of Bankstown as a 'trial site' for Income Management, without any consultation with local people or organisations. This stigmatisation is unnecessary and unwanted. The Bankstown community has been working hard on rebuilding trust and social connectedness after years of negative stereotyping. This unfair policy will only erode all the good work that's been undertaken and will increasingly marginalise Bankstown and its people.

We also fear that many small businesses and co-operatives will suffer losses because they do not have the means to accept the BasicsCard or advocate for a license.

We strongly urge you to repeal legislation which allows for the imposition of Income Management and focus on programs which will help build a positive future for our community.

- Arab Council Australia
- Association of Bhanin El-Minieh
- Australian Arab Business Network
- Australian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Alliance
- Bankstown Area Multicultural Network
- Bankstown Community Resource Group
- CatholicCare
- Combined Pensioners and Superannuants of NSW
- Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (NSW Branch)
- Council of Social Service of NSW
- Ethnic Child Care Family and Community Services Co-op
- Ethnic Communities Council of NSW
- Fairfield Local Aboriginal Access Group

- Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
- Greek Orthodox Community of NSW
- Greenacre Area Neighbourhood Centre
- Immigration Advocacy and Services Network
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- Lebanese Moslem Association
- Maritime Union of Australia (Sydney Branch)
- Metro Migrant Resource Centre
- National Tertiary Education Union (NSW)
- Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia Inc
- NSW Nurses Association

- Olivetree Women's Network
- Pacific Island Women Advocate Support Service
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