



Ngaanyatjarra
Pitjantjatjara
Yankunytjatjara
Women's Council

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Ngunnawal Ngambri Country, ACT 2600

Inquiry into compulsory income management

The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council ('NPYWC') writes in response to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights invitation to comment on the inquiry into compulsory income management ('the inquiry').

Who are we?

NPYWC is an Aboriginal Corporation that advocates for Anangu in the NPY region and is a major provider of human services for the NPY Lands. The NPY Lands span across the tri-state Central Desert region of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, covering 350,000sq km and encompassing 26 remote communities and homelands, with an overall population of around 6,000 Anangu and Yarnangu (Aboriginal people), **annexed and labelled "A"** is a map of the region. NPYWC core purpose is to work with the women and their families of the NPY region to increase their capacity to lead safe and healthy lives with improved life choices. The Council provides health, cultural and community service projects to over 6,000 men, women and children in our region. These services are not duplicated by any other service in the area.

NPYWC holds a deep legacy for the advocacy of human rights for women and children. Embedded in NPYWC's history is the gathering and strategic organisation of Anangu women who wanted to be seen and heard during the late 1970's and development of Indigenous land rights. **Annexed and labelled "B"** is a painting by M.W (dec) that tells the story of the time all Pitjantjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra, Yankunytjatjara women came together to form their own Women's Council.

NPYWC's theory of change and service provision is deeply rooted in strengths-based policies and localised processes. In essence – allowing Anangu to determine what is best for Anangu. This is the catalyst for transforming communities with the intention of every person fulfilling their right to full emotional, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing. We carry this sentiment to any inquiry that will impact the decision making of Anangu.

In this submission we will respond to points raised for *the inquiry* that align with NPYWC priorities and pressing needs. We note that any questions attached to *the inquiry* we remain silent on are not a reflection of agreement nor disagreement for the proposed reform. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further comment on these summaries.

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Submission

Consent and self-determination – UNDRIP and Closing the Gap

NPYWC holds a deep legacy for advocacy of priorities and strategies that actively involved the collective agency of Senior Anangu women. One of the advocacy triumphs was the restriction of take away alcohol sales for people residing in the NPY region. The outcome was the end result of decade long discussions from NPYWC members and Directors for direct action. During this period alcohol-related death rates were estimated at between 5-19 times higher for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.¹ The final direct action involved the then titled, *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission* and resulted in the following:

In 1996, with all over avenues exhausted, NPYWC applied to the then Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission - now the Australian Human Right Commission (the Commission) - for a Special Measures Certificate (SMC.) The Commission's 1995 Alcohol Report had noted that alcohol restrictions that apply only to Aboriginal people do not contravene the Racial Discrimination Act if they are 'special measures.'²

The above case study demonstrates the need to uphold Indigenous people's right to develop health and economic priorities and strategies, including the right to be actively involved in developing and determining the solutions to them (UNDRIP, Article 23). At the heart of this approach is self-determination and consent. The results to this approach speak for themselves and underpins the ethos of *Closing the Gap* – that that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved.³ To further uplift the recommendations of *Closing the Gap* we stress the importance of *Priority Reform 1, Shared Decision Making*. The priority reform recommends with urgency the need for policy partnerships in policy areas that are place-based and drive community-led outcomes through an investment in community-led development initiatives.⁴ This mirrors the historical and ongoing approach of NPYWC. This is the same ethos to be applied when determining strategies for income management of peoples. Nuance must be considered, self-determination be prioritised above all and resistance of any one-size fits all decision making. Compulsory policies do not support this and NPYWC publicly opposed the introduction of the roll out of the mandatory cashless debit card in 2020.⁵

¹ Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators 2009. Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2009.) Productivity Commission, Canberra, 2009.

² NPY Women's Council, Factsheet 13, Advocacy: Substance Abuse, Alcohol (2010), <https://www.npywc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/13-Substance-Abuse-Alcohol-1.pdf>.

³ Closing the Gap, *A New Way of Working Together*, <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/>.

⁴ Closing the Gap, 6. Priority Reform One – Formal partnerships and shared decision-making, <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/national-agreement-closing-the-gap/6-priority-reform-areas/one>.

⁵ NPYWC, NPY Women's Council opposes Cashless Debit Card, March 13 2020, <https://www.npywc.org.au/news/npy-womens-council-opposes-cashless-debit-card/>.

NPYWC member's experience of income management

The introduction of mandatory income management to the NPY Region was wholeheartedly opposed by NPYWC Directors in 2020. Then Council Director, Maime Butler stated that the scheme will act to disempower remote community recipients and bring them 'back to when our ancestors first walked into the missions and were fed by rations'.⁶ When the scheme was introduced remote communities were not consulted and therefore were unable to provide valuable input to how the scheme will affect their lives. The scheme failed to acknowledge the experiences of people living in poverty and the limited access to permanent employment. Mandatory income management would not change this experience or reality. Furthermore the one-size fits all model did not consider the needs of people living remotely who:

- Pay substantially more for store bought goods due to freight and travel costs;
- Speak English as a second language, making it nearly impossible to access Centrelink phone support without translators; and
- Income manage in a cultural context where resources are shared according to family obligations.

Mandatory income management brought forward the genuine risk of adding more pressure on community members with cash incomes to share what resources they had. What has been supported by NPYWC members and Directors is voluntary engagement with an income management scheme. For some community members it has provided an opportunity for people to manage their money or be protected from exploitation. Income management has been exercised by members across the board for varying reasons and needs. An example includes, Anangu living with acquired brain injuries having their income managed to ensure they are able to cover basic living costs. The successful outcomes of income management have been when they are voluntary and the strategy was self-identified and supported by Anangu themselves. Consent and self-determination remain at the heart of this positive experience.

Thank you for providing NPYWC with the opportunity to comment on this important inquiry, and please do not hesitate to contact us if there are any further questions about what we have raised in this submission.

Prepared by Chloe Fragos on behalf of NPY Women's Council

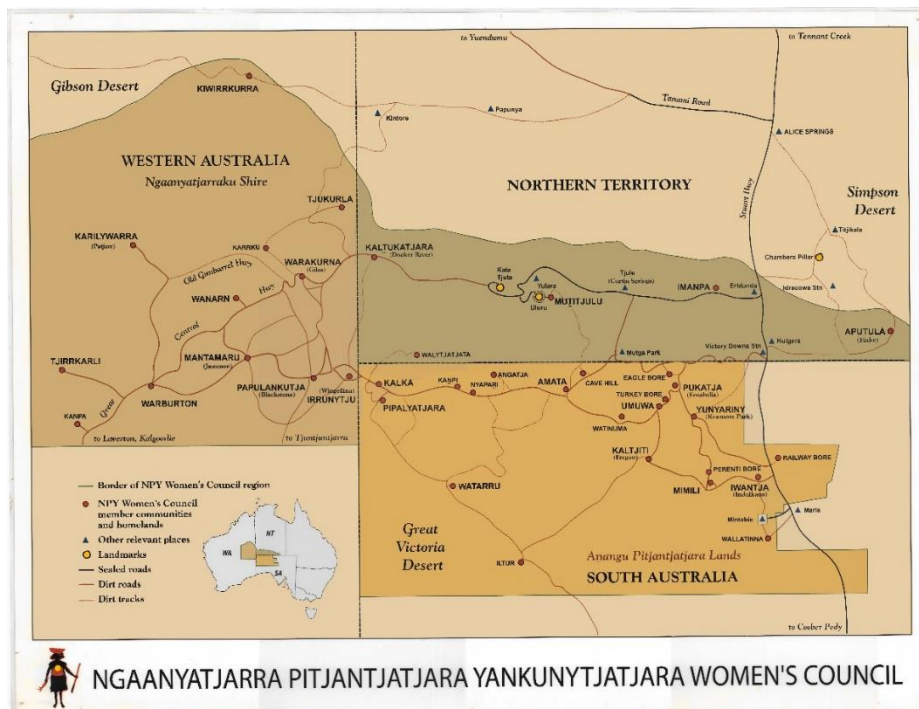
Kind Regards,



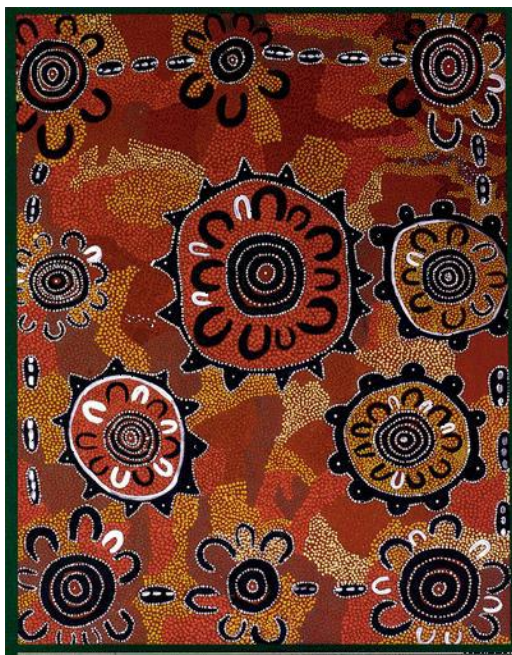
Liza Balmer
Chief Executive Officer

⁶ Ibid.

Annexure A:



Annexure B:



“This painting tells the story of how the NPY Women’s Council was started in 1980. I made a cassette tape and sent it around to all the communities for women to listen to. The black line going around the painting with the white marks is the cassette travelling around to all the women in communities. All the women listened to that cassette about the idea of starting up a Women’s Council. They sat down and talked together. Then we all came together at Kanpi to have our first meeting together. That is the big circle in the middle with all us women sitting around. This was the first time we came together, all us Pitjantjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra, Yankunytjatjara women.” - Mantatjara Wilson (dec)