

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

RE: Social Services Legislation Amendment Bill Submission

I make this submission as a person concerned with the rights and dignity of the underprivileged. I am a qualified professional engineer and the General Manager of a Melbourne based manufacturing company employing 60 people, many of them from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Privacy is a human right. In a country as wealthy as Australia, welfare payments must be considered a human right. The proposed bill would permit government to take bodily samples (for drug testing) under the duress of withholding vital welfare payments. It is a cruel and demeaning violation of our most intimate privacy. It seeks to exploit a disadvantaged population that has no realistic option but to comply or face extreme hardship.

Drug testing will be trialled and people will be subject to it depending on their geographic location for a trial period. This is tantamount to scientific experimentation on a disadvantaged group. It is an unethical experiment that is likely to cause harm and offers no benefit to those compelled to take part in the trial. If we must conduct an experiment to establish a link between income reduction and a reduction in drug use, then conduct it on a group that is not disadvantaged; drug test politicians and reduce their pay if they fail.

Is the motivation for the bill to reduce the waste of welfare funds on recreational drugs, to improve employment prospects for jobseekers or to enforce some vague and antiquated morality surrounding illegal drugs? The choice of drugs being tested for points to the latter as alcohol and tobacco are both expensive, damaging and deleterious to employment prospects yet cannabis is merely illegal.

<i>Drug</i>	<i>Harm</i>	<i>Financial Burden</i>	<i>Employment Impact</i>
Cannabis	Low	None (if grown)	Low
Tobacco	High	Very High	Low
Alcohol	Very High	High	Moderate

If we must proceed with this polling-for-compliance based good behaviour bond for welfare payments, why not extend it to full time GPS tracking for speeding offenses and body cameras to monitor compliance with a myriad of arbitrary laws? Where does it stop, with whom does it stop?

What legal protections will be put in place for the disadvantaged people we discover using illicit drugs? Will their welfare checks be cut enroute to the courthouse once the local constabulary catch wind of the test results?

If you want to help these people, don't take away their meagre income - offer them support to kick their drug habit. Better yet, scrap this inhumane abomination of a bill.