

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 1

Question No: 343

Topic: Income Management

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

What specific measures of changes in child wellbeing, safety and educational outcomes are incorporated in evaluations, as opposed to proxy measures that focus on parent/adult behaviour?

What contribution do the compulsory income management measures make to addressing the most frequently mentioned barriers to accessing high quality food, health services, education and workforce participation – see full list of recommendations for action from Aboriginal orgs in the NT (Aug 2011) at <http://www.nlc.org.au/html/files/20111608%20-%20APONT%20submission%20to%20Stronger%20Futures%20-%20Final.pdf>

What is the allocation by the federal govt to addressing these direct causes versus the allocation to indirect measure (CIM)?

Answer:

The Northern Territory (NT), Western Australia (WA) and place based income-management evaluations seek to measure changes in child wellbeing, safety, and educational participation (as linked to exemptions) using a range of data sources:

- Interviews with parents, intermediaries and community members;
- Centrelink data on expenditure patterns among income managed clients (such as changes in levels of expenditure on food), which provides an indirect indication of changes in child wellbeing; and
- Administrative by-product data from government departments, such as alcohol consumption data from the NT Department of Justice; and administrative and case file data from the Department for Child Protection (which includes a range of direct measures of changes in child wellbeing and safety such as changes in child protection and substantiation rates).

Parent and intermediary reports are an important element of effective evaluations because of the problem of attribution that occurs with more direct measures i.e. when interpreting data on changes in child outcomes over time, it is difficult to differentiate the impact of income management from the impact of a range of other programs and interventions that were introduced at the same time.

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For the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Evaluation, time series analysis of data from the Northern Territory Growth Assessment and Action (GAA) Program was undertaken on change in levels of Anaemia, Wasting, Stunting and proportion underweight in children aged 0 – 4, living in remote and very remote locations. A number of administrative data sources were also analysed as part of the NTER Evaluation: the Child Health Check Initiative program data as held by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), additional administrative data such as the National Hospital Morbidity Database and the National Perinatal Data Collection held by the AIHW, data from the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy, data from the Australian Early Development Index and school attendance records.

By providing people with a budgeting tool, compulsory income management can improve their ability to access quality food and health services. Community stores licensing in the Northern Territory has had a significant impact in improving remote community stores and the range and quality of healthy food that they provide. Income management ensures that people have funds available to buy food and other essentials.

The funding allocated to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for income management in the Northern Territory is listed in its 2011-2012 Portfolio Budget Statement on page 69. The funding allocated to the Department of Human Services to deliver the program is listed in its 2009-2010 Portfolio Budget Statement on page 52 and in its 2009-2010 Additional Estimates Statements on pages 42-43.