

To the Committee Members,

Australia has a welfare system to ensure that all of its citizens can have a basic standard of living, regardless of their circumstances. So to use welfare payments as 'stick' with which to threaten some of the most disadvantaged individuals in our society, as this Bill does, is entirely morally reprehensible.

Nobody wants to see children denied an education. However, as has been eloquently stated by others making submissions to this Inquiry, the proposed measures of the Bill lack an evidence base to demonstrate that they would actually promote school attendance.

What we do know is that suspension of welfare payments will undermine the capacity of parents to take care of their children.

We also know that there are many reasons that children may not attend school that have little to do with the control exerted over them by their carers.

And we can see that while this Bill appears to apply neutrally at first glance, its measures will actually disproportionately affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and also women.

These facts alone should be enough to make it clear that this legislation represents bad policy.

I am astonished that a clumsy application of 'social contract' theory is being used in public discourse to justify punishing those that most need assistance in raising their children. And I am extremely disappointed that this kind of legislation is being developed by a government which is ostensibly concerned with social justice.

I commend and support the submissions of ATSILS (QLD), ACOSS, The Welfare Rights Network and the Western Australian Aboriginal Legal Services to this Inquiry.

I urge the Committee members to recommend that this Bill not be passed.