Dear Senator

Re: Linking Income Support Payments to School Attendence

I am appalled about the reports of income support payments to parents being withheld if their children are not attending school, and ask that this policy be immediately withdrawn.

No-one can argue about the importance of children's school attendance, but I am at a loss to see why only income support recipients are to be punished in this manner. If the Government was serious about school attendance all parents whose children have poor school attendance would be punished in some way. Rather than income support payments it would be family tax benefit withheld, or some other means of censure employed.

This Howard-esque policy is demeaning and discriminatory towards income support recipients. I am a single mother who has always worked, is committed to the education of my child, who is actually more likely to be at school than the children of some wealthier, partnered parents. This proposed policy will impose punitive requirements on me that will not apply to others, simply and solely on the basis of my income level, with no relationship to the way my child is parented.

Your government has spoken at length about the importance of 'social inclusion' – this however is another policy that will serve only to further entrench the sense of *exclusion* I and other single mothers experience. Despite having worked all my son's life, I have now been brought in under the "Welfare to Work" regime, having to report fortnightly my regular earnings (and they have been regular for *years)* to Centrelink – another demeaning requirement; and have experienced a sharp drop in child support payments.

This policy, coupled with the Howard Government policies your government seems quite happy to continue with, serve only to further marginalize an already disadvantage group. I call on the Rudd government to act in a truly progressive way, and to treat single mothers and other income support recipients with the respect they deserve.

Yours sincerely

Jane Stanley