



Income management plan does not help support low income Australians

The AASW is concerned that the Federal Government's plans to roll out income management across the country will stigmatise low income households and have unintended punitive consequences for vulnerable children and families.

Social workers warmly welcome the re-instatement of the Racial Discrimination Act in the Northern Territory, but are concerned there is no evidence to warrant an extension of income management.

"The measures are an untested tool to address problems sometimes faced by low income households, such as alcohol and drug usage, and will do nothing to address the lack of training and education places for those seeking work, particularly in rural and remote parts of Australia," said AASW National President Professor Bob Lonne. "This crudely fashioned measure could lead many people on benefits to be fearful of seeking income and other support from Centrelink and other welfare agencies and could therefore impact negatively on the children it is seeking to help."

"Social Workers recognize the need for reciprocal obligations on those receiving income support, but the proposed measures are a blunt tool which does not recognize individual support needs, and unfairly punishes all income support recipients rather than being specifically targeted" said AASW CEO Kandie Allen-Kelly.

The creation of a class of Australians who will need to rely on a BasicsCard or Centrepay risks stigmatizing children in low income households. The AASW calls on the Government to await the evidence of the trial programs before further expanding the scheme. Where income management has been successful, it has usually been a voluntary local program. More productive initiatives include:

- An increased investment in high quality professionals working with children and their families, including measures to increase the training and recruitment of skilled and qualified staff into child protection services and industry plans to retain experienced professionals in the sector;
- A commitment to community strengthening by increased investments in services that work with families and children and their families;
- Specific programs to address the multiple needs of Indigenous children and families who continue to be over-represented in income support payments, child neglect and abuse referrals and investigations.