



Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
Via email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

17 April 2023

To the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs,

Re: Inquiry to Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Bill 2023

The Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry to Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Bill 2023.

NTCOSS is the peak body for the Northern Territory (NT) community and social services sector and is a voice for people affected by social and economic disadvantage and inequality. NTCOSS membership is made up of community managed, non-government, not for profit organisations, which work in social and community service delivery, sector development and advocacy. NTCOSS' vision is a fair, inclusive and sustainable NT.

NTCOSS represents over 130 members across the NT, including Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs), and organisations based in regional and remote areas. NTCOSS recognises the expertise of members and external stakeholders with expertise in matters relating to the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) and Income Management. In particular, NTCOSS supports submissions to this Inquiry and previous ones by ACCO members and stakeholders, including from the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT (APONT), North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), Tangentyere Council, and the Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS) and Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

Given that this is the latest in several inquiries related to income management (IM) in the NT, this submission is brief and draws your attention to previous NTCOSS submissions (see attachments 1-3) on the matter, which provide a compelling case for repealing all forms of compulsory IM:

1. Inquiry into the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Repeal of Cashless Debit Card and Other Measures) Bill 2022 [*Submission date August 2022*]
2. Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Continuation of Cashless Welfare) Bill 2020 [*Submission date October 2020*]
3. Senate Inquiry on the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management to Cashless Debit Card Transition) Bill 2019 [*Submission date October 2019*]

NTCOSS maintains its position, supported by an evaluation into IM¹, that compulsory IM is a failed policy that unfairly targets and negatively impacts Aboriginal people, and has not delivered the intended outcomes.

NTCOSS notes the intention of the Commonwealth to undertake “extensive consultation with communities, First Nations leaders and other stakeholders on the long-term future of the IM and enhanced IM regimes.” As previously stated, NTCOSS supports calls from organisations including Tangentyere Council, that withdrawing compulsory IM must be a considered process, designed/informed by consultations with ACCOs and community leaders. However, with extensive feedback and evidence from Aboriginal communities, leaders and organisations clearly and compellingly articulating that compulsory IM does not work, the need for consultation on the question of whether to repeal compulsory IM has been addressed.

While NTCOSS understands that the withdrawal of compulsory IM must be a considered process, this should not prevent the urgent and immediate repeal Part 3B of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth).

NTCOSS is deeply disheartened to see the continual focus on adapting the current compulsory IM process, i.e. changing from the Basics Card/Cashless Debit Card to the new Smart card under enhanced IM, rather than full repeal.

NTCOSS calls for the abolition of all forms of compulsory income management.

Please contact Mollie Harding, Senior Policy Officer with NTCOSS, with any queries relating to this submission at mollie@ntcoss.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Holder
Acting CEO
NT Council of Social Service

¹ Bray, J. R., Gray, M., Hand, K., & Katz, I. (2014). *Evaluating New Income Management in the Northern Territory: Final evaluation report*. Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales