

MEDIA RELEASE: Protest: Say No To The Healthy Welfare Card,
Say No To Income Management

WHEN: Tuesday April 7th, 4pm

WHERE: Parliament House, North Terrace

FILM/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES: Giant BasicsCards With Politicians' Names On Them, BasicsCard Cake, Marie Antoinette Lookalike, Other Visual Props And Street Theatre

Further Info: SIMPla (Stop Income Management in Playford) Spokesperson Pas Forgione: 0411 587 663 or simpla.playford@gmail.com.

SIMPla (Stop Income Management in Playford), Anti-Poverty Network SA, and concerned members of the public will be responding to recent announcements by the Federal Government about the Healthy Welfare Card and Income Management, protesting at Parliament House on Tuesday April 7th at 4pm.

“Abbott Government plans to introduce the Healthy Welfare Card, proposed last year by Andrew Forrest in his *Indigenous Employment And Training Review*, show they remain committed to failed, punishing, wasteful policies”, SIMPla (Stop Income Management in Playford) Spokesperson Pas Forgione said.

“Whether it is the BasicsCard, part of Income Management since the early days of the NT Intervention in 2008, or the Healthy Welfare Card, cashless debit cards issues by banks, it is the same lazy, simplistic approach from a government lacking in original ideas”, Forgione said.

As Tammy Franks MLC from SA Greens noted, “You do not fight poverty by declaring war on the poor. Stripping away dignity and self determination hasn't worked well for social welfare in the past, why would any government believe it would work at all in the future?”

“Income Management is a coercive program that does not improve the financial or personal well-being of vulnerable people. It does not build skills. It humiliates and stresses already struggling people. \$1 billion has been spent nationwide on this policy since 2007. Why would we waste more funds on this scheme?”, Forgione said.

A Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs study from 2012, *Evaluating New Income Management in the Northern Territory: First Evaluation Report* noted:

“Income Management has been applied to many who do not believe they need Income Management, and for whom there is no evidence that they have a need for, or benefit from income management. For many people the program largely operates more as a means of control rather than a process for building behaviours or changing attitudes or norms.”

The history of Income Management of Income Management is the history of one flawed justification for the policy after another. It started with child neglect: this time it is domestic violence. But government analysis from the Australian Law Reform Commission in 2011 said the *Social Security (Administration) Act* should be amended to ensure victims of domestic violence should never be forced on Income Management.

They feared forcing victims of domestic violence on the program would have the side-effect of

leaving them less safe, by making it harder for them to flee violent relationships. The National Welfare Rights Network echoed these concerns, noting Income Management could lead to “people experiencing family violence being reluctant to disclose their circumstances to Centrelink for fear of being” targeted by the policy.

“We are calling for Income Management to be terminated, with savings put into underfunded anti-addiction, employment, financial, and health services that build the strengths of vulnerable individuals and communities”, Forgione said.

“It is time to recognise that most welfare recipients are competent and responsible with their money. They survive on grossly inadequate payments below the poverty-line – what they need are higher payments to allow them a decent quality of life – not control of their finances taken off them.”