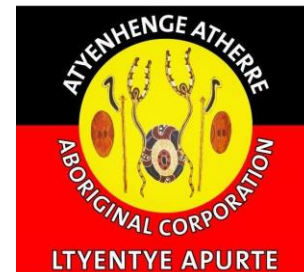




CatholicCare NT



Submission from
CatholicCare NT and Atyenhenge-Atherre Aboriginal Corporation
Inquiry into the Social Security Legislation Amendment
(Community Development Program) Bill 2018

The Joint Venture partnership between CatholicCare NT (CCNT) and Atyenhenge-Atherre Aboriginal Corporation (AAAC) delivers Community Development Program (CDP) servicing to the South East Alice Springs Region across the communities of Santa Teresa, Titjikala and Finke. The CDP service in South East Alice Springs has consistently demonstrated high performance and is well placed to provide comment on the proposed Social Security Legislation Amendment (CDP) Bill.

The CCNT/AAAC Joint Venture is opposed to the current CDP Bill 2018 and believes that the introduction of the TFC compliance model will have significant detrimental impact to the social and financial wellbeing of CDP participants and the wider community.

The TCF is a compliance model that has been designed with mainstream Australia in mind and does not reflect the unique circumstances of life in Remote Australia.

Cancelling income support for participants and then forcing a client to reapply is an overly onerous process which will likely result in the individual's complete disengagement from income support. In remote Australia there is not ready access to a Department of Human Services office and even where an office is located on community they do not generally process new claims for income support requiring the participant to spend numerous hours on a call center phone line. A new claim for Income Support also carries significant identification and documentary evidence requirements. An example of this is; for a new claim, a participant in Santa Teresa would have provided evidence on their bank account balance. This cannot be done through an ATM as a history of transactions is required. There is no banking service in Santa Teresa, forcing the participant who has no current income to travel 90 kms into Alice Springs to obtain the evidence.

Cancellation of a participant's income support payment has a significant flow on effect across the community and results in additional pressure on other household members to provide for the participant which has detrimental impact on the family budget. Under the current compliance model the participant has the opportunity to re-engage during their 8 week non-compliance period and have the remainder of their penalty waived. The proposed process offers no incentive to re-engage and with significant time away from their activity only enhances the prospect of further disengagement in the future. This penalty has a whole of community impact, which can lead to anti-social behavior due to lack of income, decreased sales in community stores and increased burden on family to provide support especially during school holiday periods where there is already a higher demand on resources within the household.

The current compliance model has been ineffective in driving attendance and there has been no evidence presented from Job Active statistics to indicate that a harsher model will result in improved attendance outcomes. An attendance model that rewards attendance rather than being punitive has been effective in the past, with the 'top-up' system utilized by CDEP seeing strong attendees rewarded with the opportunity to earn additional income through increased participation.

In July and August CCNT had 412 No-Show No-Pay failures applied. This accounted for 88 individual clients in a WFD required caseload of 179 indicating 49% of clients had at least one failure applied during this timeframe. Considering the total number of NSNP failures (412) is over 4 times the amount of participants (88) this indicates that many participants would have had multiple failures applied and under the proposed compliance model would already be under a 4 week non-payment penalty within only a 2 month timeframe.

CCNT and AAAC believe very strongly the proposed amendment should not go ahead.

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