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## **Discussion of Income Management at Directors Meeting**

**16<sup>th</sup> June 2009, Alice Springs**

*Background - On the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009, at a NPY Women's Council Directors' meeting, Directors were briefed on the Australian Government's announcement that it intended to consult with Indigenous people in the Northern Territory about future directions for the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) (Intervention.) Directors were advised of the planned dates of visits to NT communities by FaHCSIA staff as part of the new round of consultations.*

*The following comments on the income management aspect of the NTER came from a discussion generated by this briefing.*

*Note: References to individuals have been altered to protect their privacy.*

*Dates and locations of visits advised.*

Director 1 SA: Is this for SA too or wiya (not)?

Response: No, just the Northern Territory. It seems family spending has changed, and more men are getting involved in family budgeting and people are saving up a bit of that income management money for freezers and fridges and washing machines.

Director 1 WA: Some say that it is a good idea, some don't.

Discussion: Some people don't like it because they think it's telling them what to do but it is half of their money - it's not all of the money. Whether some people like it or not it means that a lot more money is being spent on food and things for the house so even though some people might not like it there have been positive outcomes.

The government acknowledges some really good things about it and the government has said its wants to continue the intervention, but not with the Racial Discrimination Act set aside. That's why the Minister is getting her Department to talk to people and get their input into how the measures can be improved.

Director 1 NT:NPY told them very clearly in the meeting with Jenny Macklin that they needed to use good interpreters when they are doing this.

Director WA: Yes they definitely need that.

Discussion: What the Minister is saying is at the moment she is determined that she will do something about women and kids in communities. That even if some changes are made she wants to ensure money is spent on food for kids and communities are provided with adequate levels of policing.

***All agreed.***

Discussion: And maybe that means that some people who don't like it might have to put up with it a bit longer. Another option (in the Discussion Paper) they are saying is for maybe people who have been on income management for a year or so, could be assessed by Centrelink can go and check them out and they can come off it if they're going palya. But I don't know how Centrelink would do it in 73 different Northern Territory communities.

They would have to go to every family and check them out. That's a lot of people. So we don't know exactly what is going to happen but the Minister seems to have in her mind that the measures have been doing a lot of good.

Director 1 SA: We need income management in SA. We know A at Ernabella. She has family members with disabilities, B & C. They receive a Disability pension but as soon as they get it it's gone in a few minutes. And that's Disability money. Income management is a good way to go. As soon as A and B get their money they get robbed by members of the

family. What I hear about the intervention and income management it's a good thing.

To other people it may sound terrible. It may be a good or bad thing, but it has a good outcome, savings for people's food, money that's for them to help feed them and clothe them. It's a good outcome for kids, good tucker, money to buy clothes that is what I hear is happening in the Northern Territory.

Director 1 SA: Every day family come to my place, every day, they want sugar, milk, I'm worried you know because all my money is gone. So that's a big problem. I'm supporting my family you know?

Response: That story is a very common story in Aboriginal communities in the NPY region. But they all get their own money individually but it all goes straight away.

Director 1 SA: They need help and we need help too.

Response: So you would like to see something like this in WA and SA is that what you are saying?

Director SA: Yes, in South Australia. If it's voluntary, people won't do it. Voluntary is not a good idea.

Director WA: Yes good for WA too.

***All agreed.***

Discussion: Need to look at this whole region not just the Northern Territory. FaHCSIA are now trialling things in Cannington WA and the Kimberley.

See in South Australia Nganampa Health is managing a voluntary card it will come into effect next year in the APY lands. It will be like a Basics card with a Photo ID. But voluntary.

Director 2 SA: Family members with disabilities, but they have to agree to sign up. But if it's not agreed in South Australia and if they

are not happy with it they can change it. You know, they can go back to Centrelink and cancel the arrangement.

Discussion: That's right. It's voluntary.

Director 1 SA: But if it is the law like income management they can't (cancel it.).

Response: That's right, if APY lands had the Basics card all that money would be spent on food, more kids would go to school, and they won't do it themselves through Centrepay. See this is what Tangentyere always runs around saying, we've been doing Centrepay for years, people are putting their money away, palya but people who really need it who spend their money on grog, who do not look after their kids they don't volunteer, they don't ask please put me on income management, please put me on Centrepay.

Director 2 SA: One of my grandchildren is walking around raggedy not dressed properly. One Aunty has clothed the child with second hand clothes.

Co-ordinator: Do you want NPY Women's Council to try to talk to the Government to write to the Government and tell that story again?

**All agreed.**

Discussion: Because even if Nganampa (Health) gets this voluntary card on the APY side, there's no guarantee Anangu with disabilities are going to agree because they won't be ninti (won't understand) to sign up.

Director 1 SA: It should be compulsory.

Discussion: Some people didn't want it in the Northern Territory but look at what is happening. It's only in Northern Territory remote communities so if you are black or you are white and you live in a prescribed area or in a town camp and you are on Centrelink, whether you are Aboriginal or not you are on income management. If you are working and getting wages it does not apply. It is mostly Aboriginal people because they're the ones that live there but if a whitefella went to live

at Kintore and went on the dole they'd be on it as well. So if you are a whitefella living down at Little Sisters with an Aboriginal wife and you are on Centrelink, you are on income management too.

Director 1 NT: Director 2 NT, please tell us your story about Centrepay?

Director 2 NT: Did not like income management at first, because I have always been responsible with money. Never wasted it. But now, I always have kuka (meat) in the house, money (on the Basics card) in the store, and money in the 'kitty bank' at Centrelink. Much less humbug and I'm managing a lot better on a pension.

Discussion: But the problem is that if people like Director 2 NT goes under (voluntary) income management and her community is small, Director X probably would have got humbugged for her money by everybody else.

Director 2 NT: You can ring up to see how much you've got and if there's not enough you can ask for the kitty bank. We have got a Centrelink agent.

Co-ordinator: You can have it transferred (from the kitty bank?)

Director 2 NT: Yes, transferred.