

## **MEDIA RELEASE: Compulsory Income Management Not The Solution To Child Neglect And Abuse**

**Further Information: SIMPla (Stop Income Management in Playford) Spokesperson Pas Forgione: 0411 587 663 or [simpla.playford@gmail.com](mailto:simpla.playford@gmail.com).**

“Calls by SA Coroner Mark Johns to expand the use of Income Management for cases of child neglect and abuse ignore the lack of data showing Income Management is an effective child protection tool. Such calls should be treated with skepticism”, SIMPla (Stop Income Management in Playford) Spokesperson Pas Forgione said.

Income Management operates in various locations, including the NT, where it was introduced in 2008, and where there are over 20,000 clients. In 2012 it was extended to the Playford LGA in northern Adelaide, and several other suburban and regional sites throughout Australia.

In Playford, according to Department of Social Services August 2014 figures, there were 624 Income Management clients, of which 518, or 83 percent, were compulsory, with 17 percent voluntary. Child Protection Income Management clients represented less than one-percent of clients.

“There is no evidence from the NT, where rates of child protection notifications and removals have been soaring for many years, with removals increasing 30 percent according to the Productivity Commission, that Income Management has led to declining rates of neglect and abuse, or improved child nutrition and wellbeing”, Forgione said.

“The Menzies School of Health’s 2010 study of spending patterns of NT Income Management clients reported that apart from the impacts of government stimulus payments, there have been no significant changes to consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, and soft drink, nor to fresh fruit and vegetables, among clients.”

“The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library’s 2012 paper, *Is Income Management Working?*, said there was ‘an absence of evidence relating to the effectiveness or otherwise’ of the scheme.”

“In WA, where Child Protection Income Management also operates, evidence from a Western Australian Council of Social Service study suggests Income Management has the potential to increase the dependency of clients on others to manage their money and affairs, rather than building their financial and personal skills through capacity-building programs.”

“The rate of clients accessing support services was very low, with participation in financial counselling only 20 percent. 55 percent of surveyed financial counsellors expressed concerns about Income Management ‘deskilling’ their clients, leaving them more vulnerable over the long-run.”

“And child protection workers themselves have often been concerned by and sometimes opposed to Income Management being a child protection tool. In the Bankstown LGA in NSW, child protection workers have been boycotting Income Management for over two years, regarding the scheme as counter-productive and heavy-handed.”

“They believe Income Management undermines the positive, trustful relationships they seek to build with their clients, which are critical to inducing behavioural change, and needlessly increases workloads for an already extremely strained and overburdened child protection system.”

“Coercive approaches like Income Management also have the potential to exacerbate family

conflict and breakdown, by increasing frustration and stress experienced by already struggling parents.”

“SIMPlA believe rather than persisting with or seeking to extend an expensive, failed program like Income Management, greater investments are needed throughout the child protection system to ensure notifications can be responded to promptly by well-resourced staff, rather than simplistic responses.”

“More prenatal and early childhood services would also be much more cost-effective than further relying on Income Management, which in the Playford LGA is estimated to cost roughly \$4,000 per person per year”, Forgione said.