



CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA CAUTIONS AGAINST NEW QUARANTINING ARRANGEMENTS

Welcoming the re-instatement of the Racial Discrimination Act, Catholic Social Services Australia today cautioned against applying untried policies across the population, particularly in the absence of programs and services that are known to be effective.

Executive Director, Frank Quinlan said the initiatives outlined this morning will do little to resolve the issues currently facing some of the most disadvantaged Australians.

"We welcome the Government's announcement that the Bill will be referred to a Senate Committee. Senators will need to consider the following questions," Mr Quinlan said.

- Is the current level of income support (whether managed or not) adequate for families to meet their basic needs and how should that level of income be determined?
- Where is the research evidence that suggests this form of income management is successful in lifting people out of poverty?
- Is that research evidence valid in other locations?
- If income management is to be applied, what additional programs and services will be required to ensure the initiative is effective and non discriminatory?
- What additional resources should be applied to local communities once the government identifies them as disadvantaged?
- How is this initiative to be integrated with other programs so that multiple disadvantage can be addressed in a coordinated way?

"The research is clear about what works for disadvantaged families," Mr Quinlan said.

"We are concerned that many effective programs are not adequately funded and that programs such as welfare quarantining will have little positive effect on their own and may even have the effect of further demoralising some poor families.

"The Federal Government's announcement that would see welfare quarantining rolled out nationally by December 2010 appears to shift discrimination from Indigenous people alone to poor people living in disadvantaged areas right across Australia.

"The Government is proposing to take the most regressive aspects of the Northern Territory emergency response and apply them nationally without the new resources that were applied in the Northern Territory.

"At the heart of many disadvantaged locations is a complex range of issues including alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, child neglect and abuse, mental health issues, and other chronic health conditions.

"Helping people move beyond disadvantage requires a balance between incentives and support.

"Catholic Social Services Australia set out the principles of mutual obligation in its discussion paper which identifies the core factors in supporting people on low incomes.

"We look forward to the details of the Bill and to consulting with the Government and the Senate on this significant piece of legislation," Mr Quinlan said.

The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform and Reinstatement of Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009 was introduced in the House of Representatives this morning.

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