

16 April 2012

Dear Friend

The union movement has consistently supported Aboriginal peoples' rights to land and self-determination since the 1960s, and has opposed the damaging effects of the racist and authoritarian NT Intervention on Aboriginal communities imposed by the Howard government in 2007 and continued by the Gillard Government. Now, new legislation is set to extend the NT Intervention for a further 10 years and to expand its provisions for compulsory income management to communities across the country.

Bankstown, Sydney, is one of the five trial sites for national compulsory income management. What does this mean? From public sector workers in housing, child protection, Centrelink and schools, through the whole education and community sectors, **the relationship between workers and their clients is set to be fundamentally changed by compulsory income management.** It will take the increasingly punitive and discriminatory direction of social welfare policy in Australia to a whole new level. We should instead be striving to support programs that lead to self sufficiency.

Income Management will also impact adversely on refugee and humanitarian communities. Many feel survivor guilt and therefore "do without" so they can send money back to family in their countries of origin and in refugee camps. This act alone could trigger a 'financially vulnerable' label and an imposition of income management.

We need to get organised to oppose the implementation of this policy. In July, Centrelink case officers will be instructed to place "vulnerable" welfare recipients in Bankstown on compulsory income management. Between 50% and 70% of welfare payments would be quarantined. The income managed money could be placed on a BASICS card, which can only be used in certain government approved supermarkets for certain products. We believe that a successful campaign to stop this roll-out here can play a vital role in undermining the policy on a national level.

We are writing to seek your participation in a campaign to unite the community and unionists in calling for a moratorium on government-imposed compulsory income management.

A community campaign has already formed in Bankstown, with members from across the social service sector and local community - the **Say No To Government Income Management Campaign Coalition.** We have also built strong connections with Aboriginal people and organisations in the Northern Territory who have been struggling against the discriminatory NT Intervention for the past four years. Our open letter opposing compulsory income management has been endorsed by 54 organisations, representing a broad range of civil society including the NSW Council of Social Service, Unions NSW and numerous affiliated unions.

We would like to broaden the participation of unions and unionists in this campaign, through the following events:

1. **An organising meeting for unionists** hosted by the Say No To Government Income Management Campaign Coalition on **Wednesday 2 May at 430pm**, at the Arab Council of Australia office at 194 Stacey Street near the Bankstown train station. Please send delegates to this meeting to discuss building this campaign.
2. **A union and community seminar proposed to be on Saturday May 26 at 1pm** that will cover:

- a. the experience of compulsory income management in the NT,
- b. the mechanics of the model being implemented in Bankstown and the other trial sites and
- c. a strategy session to discuss the campaign calling for a moratorium on compulsory income management.

The Canterbury-Bankstown Branch of the NSW Teachers' Federation have offered to host the event, we hope other unions will join them.

3. **A rally and public meeting in late June** (proposed to be Saturday 16th June) protesting 5 years of the NT Intervention and calling for a moratorium on the expansion of compulsory income management in Bankstown and nationally.

Please help build the campaign by:

- Signing the open letter (attached)
- Nominating a contact person or persons for the campaign
- Sending delegates to the Wednesday 2 May organising meeting
- Endorsing the seminar (proposed to be on 26th May) and rally and public meeting (proposed to be on 16th June), advertising them to your members, and sending delegates
- Having someone from the campaign speak to your workplace and/or Union meetings
- Organising a meeting to discuss the campaign (we can supply speakers)
- Donating towards the costs of organising the meeting (for example we would like to bring at least one speaker from the NT, and potentially others from campaigns in other states).

We are also encouraging all supporting organisations and individuals to take part in local resident meetings with Jason Clare, the local MP and Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice, in his electoral office during the month of April. The Woodville Community Services are coordinating these visits; please contact Pam Batkin pbatkin@woodville.org.au and Jackie Millynn jmillynn@woodville.org.au.

Together, we can stop this policy and the damaging effect it will have on our communities and our jobs.

Please contact say.no.to.gov.im@gmail.com, Randa Kattan on 0433 144 858 or Penny Howard on 0402 355 205 for more information and to get involved.

Signed,

John Morris, President, Canterbury-Bankstown Teachers Federation

Sally McManus, New South Wales and ACT (Services) Branch Secretary, Australian Services Union

Paul McAleer, Sydney Branch Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia

Say No To Government Income Management Coalition, Bankstown

John Falzon, Chief Executive Officer of the St. Vincent de Paul Society

Peter Murphy, SEARCH Foundation

Sue Gillet, Public Service Association member and Aboriginal activist in Bankstown

Violet Roumeliotis, ICEO, Settlement Services International

Pam Batkin, Executive Officer, Woodville Community Services

Randa Kattan, Executive Director, Arab Council Australia

Stop The Intervention Collective, Sydney