

FOREWORD

The questions are often asked: why are we unable to close the gap? Why is it that we spend so much on Indigenous issues yet so little has been done to overcome Indigenous disadvantage?

These questions will continue to be posed until there is a clearer understanding of what works and what doesn't work in terms of programs and policies being introduced into Indigenous communities. And the only way to evaluate a framework to understand where and why policy success occurs is through an evidence-based approach.

Income management has been one of the most controversial policies introduced into Indigenous community in recent times and was one of the most contentious aspects of the Northern Territory intervention when it was rolled out in 2007. The need to suspend the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* to enable the policy to be implemented added to the controversy and concerns.

While critics at the time questioned the policy on the basis that there was no evidence that it would work, others maintained that the issues facing the communities in the Northern Territory were so critical that drastic measures were appropriate and necessary.

As the policy has been reviewed, maintained and is being rolled out across other parts of Australia, we need an in depth assessment of what we can now learn about the program from analysis of how it has worked.

Eva Cox, one of Australia's leading public intellectuals, has been at the forefront of debates around welfare sector reform for decades and has continued at the vanguard of debates around welfare reform in recent years. She has engaged in fearless intellectual critique around income management right from the beginning of the announcement of it as a new policy direction.

She has used her practical and academic skills as a professional researcher and teacher of research methods, as well as her extensive policy development experience, to examine the 'evidence' used for government decisions and to challenge these. The many submissions made to various inquiries and data collected provide evidence of the flaws and limits of government processes and decisions.

The documents demonstrate how lack of evidence can contribute to bad policy making and program failures. This exegesis illustrates how many Government policies can waste money and effort, rather than the program recipients.

We are proud to publish this issue of the Journal of Indigenous Policy that focuses on her perspectives and judgement of the errors in this important policy

area. The case study also illustrates the dangers of ignoring bad Indigenous policies as they are now being expanded to cover the rest of the population.

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