

## POSTSCRIPT

The following report was published as this Journal issue was being finalised. The research on *Women's Experience of Income Management in the Northern Territory* was prepared by Equality Rights Alliance, one of six National Women's Alliances funded by the Federal Office for Women. As part of its brief to report on women's views on policy it collected views of women on income management in Alice Springs and Darwin this year. A series of focus groups and interviews engaged a total of 183 women with direct experience of income management, who completed surveys and/or participated in some discussion groups and interviews. This total number exceeds the samples of other surveys covered in this document.

To quote from the summary:

The survey and group discussions offer a range of views from the women affected by the BasicsCard Income Management nexus. There are some key concerns that were widely expressed by the women who took the time to give us their views. One area of concern was the apparent lack of understanding of most participants as to the purpose of the program or why they were on it. Most women said it had had little or no effect on what they bought, and many said the card added to the difficulties and costs of paying for goods and services.

Some found benefits, such as saving and budgeting, and less humbugging, but they were very much the minority. Women raised concerns about not asking for Centrelink help to exit abusive relationships because they don't want to be referred for Income Management. Most women say they do not want to tell Centrelink if they have problems.

As stated above, this is not an evaluation of the program itself, but a measure of how a relatively large number of women report their experiences. The discomfort many report about being seen to use the card is also a matter of concern. The loss of a sense of respect and dignity is damaging to women, and can impact on their capacity to care for others. Nearly three quarters of women said they do not feel safer. While some women report seeing less fighting since the introduction of Income Management, others report seeing more petty crime to obtain cash. More research is needed to clarify the effect of Income Management on crime and violence levels in the community, but it is clear that Income Management has not changed the perception of safety for the women who participated in this research. The perception of the majority of women was that Centrelink and others in their community do not respect them, and consider them to be not competent with money or as parents.<sup>105</sup>

This study further indicates problems with the program. It reinforces concerns about possible negative income impacts of income management that are not being given due weight in its continuation and expansion.

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<sup>105</sup> Equality Rights Alliance, *Women's Experience of Income Management in the Northern Territory* (2011) [www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au](http://www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au)