

MEDIA RELEASE



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Intervention changes fail to deliver required reform

ANTaR has today cautiously welcomed improved protections against racial discrimination in the Northern Territory but argues there is a long way to go in the transition from intervention to sustained investment in community development.

“It’s time to really engage Aboriginal communities in lasting solutions to the problems they face, and end the top-down coercive approach,” said Dr Janet Hunt, ANTaR President.

“ANTaR is disappointed that, although legislation passed last night improves on the current situation, it will not achieve the full reinstatement of the *Racial Discrimination Act* (RDA) to the Northern Territory.”

“The new legislation fails to address a number of discriminatory aspects of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), including five-year leases of Aboriginal land and extensive Government powers to control the delivery of Indigenous community services.”

Changes to the income management scheme in the Northern Territory will mean that some Aboriginal people will be able to leave the scheme. However, ANTaR will today argue in a submission to Government that a majority of Indigenous social security recipients will be unfairly subject to income management under draft guidelines which go far beyond the scope of the previously announced policy.

“If implemented in their current form, the draft income management guidelines will require low income Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to demonstrate that they are not experiencing financial hardship in order to avoid having their income managed by Government. ANTaR calls on the Government to substantially revise the guidelines to narrow their scope,” said Dr Hunt.

“Compared with other low income population groups in Australia, Indigenous people are at highest risk of deprivation and hardship. Those in remote areas also face much higher costs of living,” Dr Hunt said.

“Government consultations with communities last year revealed a diversity of views on income management but no clear endorsement of the current policy.”

“On the contrary, a strong theme in consultations was the desire to move towards alternative models of income management which are community-supported, targeted or voluntary. The new scheme does not meet this test.”

“The new income management scheme in the Northern Territory will come at a cost of about \$17,500 per person. However, the effectiveness of this expensive scheme in achieving positive and sustained outcomes for children, families and communities has not been demonstrated.”

The legislation maintains the current discriminatory policies on five-year leases and the extensive Business Management Area powers, which enable the Commonwealth to vary and terminate funding agreements at any time and control the management and assets of Indigenous service delivery organisations.

“These are extraordinary powers which undermine community capacity and the right to self-determination. They have not been justified by the Government and the fact that they have not been used for the last three years indicates that there is no need for them to continue,” Dr Hunt said.

ANTaR welcomes changes from blanket to more tailored alcohol restrictions and the redesign of the community stores licensing scheme to improve transparency.

“Despite these improvements, we remain concerned that resourcing and capacity restrictions will mean that blanket prohibition will continue in most areas, inhibiting urgently needed system-wide alcohol reform in the NT.”

The establishment of independent, transparent and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all NTER measures, particularly income management, must now be a priority.

“The Government must also make a genuine commitment to ongoing consultation with Aboriginal communities and key stakeholder organisations in the implementation of NTER policy changes.”

ANTaR’s comments on the income management draft policy guidelines are available on our [website](#).

ANTaR is the pre-eminent non-Indigenous national advocacy organisation dedicated specifically to the rights - and overcoming the disadvantage - of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. .

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