

MEDIA RELEASE



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Missed opportunity to reset policy direction and relationships with NT communities

The Federal Government's announcement today of plans to extend its intervention in the NT reflects a missed opportunity to build a genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities in planning for their future.

"Despite broad calls for the language and style of 'intervention' to be abandoned, today's announcements show a determination to continue on much the same course", said ANTaR National Director, Jacqueline Phillips.

The Federal Government has announced plans to extend the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) across additional NT Aboriginal communities, to continue alcohol restrictions and to create additional ranger positions and traineeships in remote communities.

"While support for additional jobs and traineeships is welcome, the continuation of blanket alcohol restrictions and extension of social security penalties for school attendance reflects more top-down and coercive policy from Canberra."

"There is no evidence to support the Government's plan to suspend Centrelink payments to families whose children are not regularly attending school."

SEAM has been trialled in a number of NT communities since 2009 but has not been formally evaluated.

"Under the policy, families face more than 3 months without income. ANTaR is concerned that this poses a serious risk to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal families, for uncertain returns."

"It is also unclear how the Federal Government's policy will interact with the NT Government's policy to fine families whose children are not attending school. ANTaR is very concerned that disadvantaged families may be subject to two, overlapping punitive regimes."

"We are also concerned that, once again, the Government has sidestepped the real educational challenges identified by communities in recent consultations. It has also ignored key evidence from the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse about what works: local community involvement and Aboriginal control, highly skilled teachers and recognition of Aboriginal culture."

"The school attendance policy has been announced without seeking community feedback on the model proposed. The *Stronger Futures* consultations cannot be taken as endorsement for the announced policy."

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