

MEDIA RELEASE: 700 PERCENT INCREASE IN NUMBER OF INCOME MANAGEMENT CLIENTS IN PLAYFORD

The number of Income Management clients in the City of Playford in northern Adelaide has increased almost 700 percent over the second half of 2013, according to data from the Department of Social Services. As of December 27th, 495 people were on Income Management. The May 23rd figure for Playford, seven months earlier, was 71 people.

Pas Forgione, Spokesperson for SIMPla (Stop Income Management in Playford) said, 'This is an enormous blow-out in the number of Income Management clients, the vast majority of whom have been pushed onto the program without their consent. 403 clients, or 81 percent of all clients in Playford, are forced participants.'

'Most of the massive increase is due to the introduction last July of new youth triggers for Income Management, mainly affecting young people on the Unreasonable To Live At Home rate of Youth Allowance.'

Simon Schrapel, Chief Executive of Uniting Communities said, 'The rapid rise in Playford residents being forced on to Compulsory Income Management should sound a warning for the whole community - the basic right to be in control of how you spend your own money is being eroded and it will only foster a greater level of welfare dependency which is one of the things the scheme was supposedly designed to reduce.'

Forgione said, 'Income Management is a failed policy. It is a counterproductive measure that does not build the capacities of at-risk clients or improve their health and well-being. In fact, there is evidence that the humiliation and stigma it inflicts on clients could be harmful over the long-term.'

'According to estimates by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, total spending nationwide for Income Management from 2005-2006 to 2014-2015 will reach \$1 billion. The per person cost of Income Management in Playford has been estimated at \$4,600 per annum.'

Inga Baker, local resident and SIMPla member said, 'Hundreds of people receiving Centrelink payments are being forced onto the BasicsCard without justification. Why are we being treated differently? Why are people in the Playford region being treated like second-class citizens? What did we do wrong? This policy is a heavy-handed approach that limits the spending options of the participants and takes away the right to control personal finances.'

An Open Letter calling for the policy to be scrapped, which has been endorsed by over 40 state and national organisations representing diverse sections of the community, will be tabled this week in the Senate by Senator Sarah Hanson-Young of the Greens.

Forgione said, 'There is a broad range of organisations that have joined our campaign and made public their opposition to this failed policy. Supporting organisations include Aboriginal NGOs,

faith-based groups, multicultural groups, domestic violence services, trade unions, and welfare agencies.'

Cheryl Axleby, Chief Executive of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, said, 'We need to ensure individuals living in poverty are not punished for their circumstances and are treated with dignity and respect, that they are not looked down upon by our society.'

Forgione said, 'We are all calling for Income Management to be terminated, with savings put into services that build the skills of vulnerable clients and have a track-record of success, and for Centrelink payments to be lifted to more liveable levels.'

Further Information: SIMPLa (Stop Income Management in Playford) Spokesperson, Pas Forgione - on 8231 6982/0411 587 663 or at simpla.playford@gmail.com.