

Thursday 10 August, 2017

Turnbull Government extends its control & disempowerment of Aboriginal & Torres Strait people

The Turnbull Government is set to extend the rolling-out of the cashless debit card to Indigenous communities.

This paternalistic policy continues the Turnbull Government's disempowering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Firstly, it set up the Community Development Program (CDP) – a discriminatory program which forces workers in remote communities to work 25 hours a week without pay, employment conditions or rights.

Now, it wants to impose control over where people spend the money they work for. The card takes away the power of people to decide where they spend the money they earn through working in the compulsory and discriminatory CDP.

This Turnbull Government agenda reduces people's autonomy, strips away their rights and sets communities up to fail.

Quotes attributable to Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Secretary Sally McManus:

"When you overlay the CDP, which forces people into work, with the cashless debit card, we now have a situation where people work, they aren't paid a wage, and the little money they do get is controlled by the Government."

"We cannot have one set of rules for Indigenous people and another for non-Indigenous people."

"This program sends a signal to Indigenous people that this government doesn't trust them with money. It also sends a signal to the broader community that Indigenous Australians are less capable than non-Indigenous Australians. It's blatantly discriminatory and needs to end."

"Minister Nigel Scullion has refused to meet with the ACTU to discuss alternatives to the program, despite an open invitation which has been standing for a year."

"We are campaigning to change the rules for Indigenous people and end the CDP."

Quotes attributable to ACTU Indigenous Officer Lara Watson:

"Too much power has been taken from Indigenous people and handed to for-profit companies and the Government, which seeks to control this group of working people."

"This program echoes the themes of control and paternalism which we see in the CDP. Indigenous people need to be given autonomy and allowed to choose how to live their lives, just as any other citizen of Australia is able to."

"We're asking for nothing more than an end to legislated racial discrimination. It's completely unacceptable that we are still having this conversation in 2017, and deeply disappointing that Minister Scullion has refused to meet with us."

ENDS

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