



Australian Centre for
Child Protection

The effectiveness of Child Protection Income Management in Australia

**A report to the Child Protection Systems
Royal Commission**

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BACKGROUND

The recent coroner's inquest into the death of Chloe Valentine outlined a number of recommendations for improvement of South Australia's child protection system to prevent any future deaths resulting from child abuse or neglect. One such recommendation related to income management as a child protection tool. The Australian Centre for Child Protection was commissioned by the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission to conduct a rapid review of the research and evidence surrounding the effectiveness of child protection income management and whether such a scheme might have unintended consequences for families. The results of the review are presented in this report.

What is income management?

Income management is a scheme in which 50% or more of welfare income paid to an individual or family by Centrelink (Australia's social security system) is 'quarantined' and restrictions are placed on how this can be spent (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2010; Buckmaster, Ey, & Klapdor, 2012). This quarantined income can only be spent on life 'essentials' such as food, rent, bills, health, school expenses, and travel. It is accessible either by a Personal Identifying Number (PIN) – protected 'BasicsCard' (Electronic Funds Transfer Point of Sale (EFTPOS) card) that is only accepted at selected stores or by electronic payments direct to stores or service providers.

As part of this scheme, the government also offer matched savings incentive payments, as well as free and confidential financial management support services and training that individuals can voluntarily attend to learn strategies for effectively managing their finances (Buckmaster, et al., 2012). Under the matched savings incentives, the government matches every dollar (up to \$500) in the personal bank account of individuals who meet set criteria. Individuals may be connected to additional services and supports (e.g., family support, drug and alcohol services) as required; however, these are not specifically provided as part of the income management scheme.

The aims of income management are to reduce passive welfare dependency and encourage spending on priority needs, particularly those of children, to alleviate immediate hardship that may have resulted from inadequate financial management; and to reduce the amount of income available to be spent on items such as alcohol, tobacco, pornography and gambling (AIHW, 2010; Buckmaster, et al., 2012). It is targeted at a range of populations, including long-term welfare recipients, disengaged youth, and vulnerable children and families who are perceived to benefit from having their income managed (Buckmaster, et al., 2012).

Income management is in operation in various locations across Australia; however, the specific measures in place vary slightly between each of these locations. Three main measures that are currently in operation include: Child Protection Income Management (CPIM), Vulnerable Welfare Payment Recipients measure (VWPR; also known as the Vulnerable Income Management), and Voluntary Income Management (VIM; Buckmaster, et al., 2012; Deloitte, 2014; Mendes, Waugh, & Flynn, 2014). The proportion of welfare income quarantined to encourage spending on the essential needs of individuals, families, and children is usually 70% for CPIM, and 50% for both VWPR and VIM. These measures are described in more detail in Box 1.

Box 1. Forms of income management

Child Protection Income Management CPIM

An individual receiving a relevant welfare payment may be referred for CPIM by child protection staff if their child/ren have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, neglect and it is determined that income management would improve outcomes for the child/ren (Deloitte, 2014). CPIM may be in place for a period of three, six, nine, or twelve months after which the individual's circumstances are reviewed.

Vulnerable Welfare Payment Recipients measure VWPR

An individual receiving a relevant welfare payment may be referred to VWPR if they have been identified as vulnerable and/ or at risk either by a social worker assessment or an automatic system trigger (Deloitte, 2014; Bray, et al., 2014). A social worker will refer an individual for VWPR if they have determined that the individual is experiencing an indicator of vulnerability (financial hardship, financial exploitation, failure to undertake reasonable self-care, and homelessness or risk of homelessness) that is impacting on their ability to meet their own essential needs (or those of their dependants) and it is believed that income management could address this issue. Automatic triggers are directed at young welfare recipients who are automatically referred for VWPR if they live in an area where it is being implemented and are: 1) under 16 and receiving a Special Benefit payment; or 2) over 16 and receiving the Unreasonable to Live at Home rate of payment for Youth Allowance, Disability Support Pension, or ABSTUDY; or 3) under 25 and receiving a crisis payment upon prison release.

Voluntary Income Management VIM

An individual receiving a relevant welfare payment may elect to be subject to VIM if they need help managing their money but do not meet the criteria for VWPR (Bray, et al., 2014; Buckmaster, et al., 2012; Deloitte, 2014). Individuals must stay on VIM for a minimum of 13 weeks, after which they can choose to discontinue at any time. Incentive payments that are 100% managed are offered if individuals stay on VIM for 26 consecutive weeks.

Relevant welfare payments that may be subject to income management are 'Category H' payments, which include: social security benefits (e.g. youth, widow, parenting, or newstart allowances); social security pensions (e.g. age, disability support, carer, special needs, or parenting payment); payments under the ABSTUDY scheme; and a Department of Veteran's Affairs service pension, welfare payment supplement or defence force welfare payment allowance (for a full list of relevant welfare payments, see Deloitte, 2014 and Bray, et al. 2014).

Individuals may be able to apply for an exemption from income management if they can provide evidence that management is not, or is no longer, necessary as they meet desired financial and behavioural indicators (Buckmaster, et al., 2012; Bray, et al., 2014; Deloitte, 2014). This is dependent upon which scheme of income management to which an individual is subject. For example, individuals on CPIM cannot apply for an exemption but those on VWPR can (except individuals subject to VWPR in the Northern Territory). If ineligible to apply for an exemption, an individual can request that their circumstances be reviewed. Centrelink lists the exemption criteria for the varying income management measures on their website (www.humanservices.gov.au).

History of income management in Australia

Income management was first introduced in the Northern Territory in 2007 as part of the Australian Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). This was a blanket policy that applied to all individuals who received welfare income and lived in one of 10 town camp regions or one of 73 prescribed Aboriginal communities or their associated outstations in the Northern Territory (Bray, et al., 2014). Whilst this applied to all individuals on welfare and living in the prescribed areas (unless they were excluded after demonstrating they were not members of, or had little connection to, the community), the majority of people subject to this Compulsory Income Management (CIM) were Aboriginal Australians. In order for the components of the NTER to be implemented, including income management, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwth) was suspended.

After being met with a lot of criticism, this measure was extended to become the 'New Income Management' measure introduced in 2010 and the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwth) was reinstated. This 'new' measure, which currently operates in the Northern Territory, expanded the residential criteria for CIM to include all areas of the Northern Territory, expanded the exclusion eligibility criteria to include individuals who could demonstrate appropriate behaviours, only applied to individuals on certain welfare payments (particularly excluding age and disability support pensions), and introduced 'voluntary' income management. CIM in the Northern Territory consists of sub-measures including the Long Term Welfare Payment Recipient measure and Disengaged Youth measure. Other income management measures also operating in the Northern Territory are the VWPR and CPIM measures, as well as a Supporting People at Risk measure introduced in 2012 as part of the Northern Territory Mandatory Treatment Program. In 2013, the VWPR measure was extended to include automatic referral system that is triggered when individuals meet a set criteria on the welfare system. Individuals can only apply for exclusions from CIM.

In 2008, income management was implemented in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Aurukun, Hope Vale, Coen, and Mossman Gorge in Queensland as part of the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial. Community consultation occurred in the development of this trial prior to the four communities formally signing up to the trial (FaHCSIA, 2012), which has been extended to operate until the end of 2015. The approach to referring an individual for income management (known as Conditional Income Management) in these communities is slightly different than in other locations across Australia. Welfare recipients living in any of the four communities may be referred to the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) if they have a child who has been absent from school more than three days in a school term without a reasonable excuse; have a child of school-age who is not enrolled in school without a lawful excuse; are subject to a child safety report; are convicted of an offence in the Magistrates Court; or breach their tenancy agreement. After referral, the FRC meet with the individual to discuss the issues leading to their referral and how they may be addressed. This may include the management of 60-75% of their welfare income for between three to twelve months.

A trial of income management in Western Australia was also initiated in 2008 in the Kimberley, Perth Metro, and Peel regions. The measures implemented are VIM and CPIM (Department of Social Services [DSS], 2014). In 2013, these measures of income management were also implemented in the Ngaanjatjarra (NG) Lands, Laverton Shire, and the Kiwirrkurra community in Western Australia. Although it is legislated for, the CPIM measure is not used in the NG Lands, Laverton, and Kiwirrkurra (Bray, et al., 2014).

In 2012, a 5-year trial of Place-Based Income Management (PBIM) was initiated in five disadvantaged communities across Australia, including: Bankstown, New South Wales; Greater Shepparton, Victoria; Playford, South Australia; Logan and Rockhampton, Queensland. The measures of income management implemented as part of this model are VIM, CPIM, and VWPR (Deloitte, 2014). In 2014, Ceduna in South Australia became an additional location implementing the PBIM model (Bray, et al., 2014). Unlike, individuals on the VWPR measure in the Northern Territory, those on this measure in the PBIM locations can apply to be excluded from having their income managed.

A similar model of income management was also introduced in 2012 to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia upon request from, and consultation with, the community. VIM is the predominant stream of income management in place in the APY Lands, and only a minute proportion of those on income management are subject to the CPIM or VWPR measures (Katz & Bates, 2014).

METHOD

Literature relevant to this report was identified using key terms including “income management”, “quarantining income”, and “welfare quarantining” to search the following databases: SAGE Journals, Scopus, Web of Science, Academic Search Premier, and Informit. Other relevant literature, including evaluations commissioned by Government, was identified by examining the reference lists of the literature already identified in the aforementioned searches as well as through Google searches using the same key terms.

LIMITATIONS

Evaluation research

There is little research investigating the effectiveness of income management generally, and even less investigating child protection income management specifically. Of the research that has been conducted, there are significant limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the findings. Firstly, it is incredibly difficult to objectively measure changes in behaviour and attitudes (Mendes, et al., 2014), particularly when policies are enacted on whole of population basis. The research predominantly consists of self-report, qualitative data collected from very small samples of participants and has very limited or no baseline data or comparison groups against which changes can be measured to determine if they are a result of income management (Mendes, et al., 2014).

Additionally, in many cases, changes cannot be exclusively attributed to income management as this was implemented in conjunction with many other programs and interventions. As a result, the findings of these studies cannot be generalised outside of their respective samples and applied to other disadvantaged communities across Australia. Caution must be taken when interpreting the findings and making conclusions about the effectiveness of income management.

INCOME MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION

Several limitations to the implementation of income management have been reported, particularly in relation to the use of the BasicsCard. Issues reported in the Northern Territory include the limited number and variety of approved stores and having to pay higher prices at these stores, minimum purchase limits and surcharges when using the card in stores, restricting ability to travel interstate due to lack of local approved stores, difficulty determining the remaining card balance, and a variety of issues relating to rent and utility payments causing undue stress to recipients (AIHW, 2010; FaHCSIA, 2011; Puszka, Greatorex, & Williams, 2013; Bray, et al., 2014).

In addition to the above limitations, community members in Mäpuru, North East Arnhem Land (Northern Territory), also reported increased food insecurity as local stores were not approved to accept the BasicsCard, increased travel expenses resulting from having to travel to larger regional centres (e.g. Galiwin'ku) to access approved stores, forced centralisation to these larger regional centres to improve food security and reduce additional travel expenses, and other travel issues such as becoming stranded away from home due to lack of funds to get back (Puszka, et al., 2013). Other issues reported relating to the BasicsCard included having to call Centrelink to check the balance prior to going shopping, using the card for transport costs, and money not being transferred onto the card when it should have been.

Many of these limitations were also reported in Western Australia (DSS, 2014) and Queensland (FaHCSIA, 2012; KPMG, 2010). In the APY Lands, few limitations were reported except those relating to setting up rent payments, and practical issues relating to the BasicsCard and accessing managed funds like those mentioned above, but particularly regarding lack of approved stores on, and when travelling outside of, the Lands (Katz & Bates, 2014). This is possibly due to most recipients voluntarily signing up to be income managed, income management being requested by the community, and consultations with the community having been conducted prior to income management being implemented.

Attempts to address some of these practical limitations have been made by expanding the number and variety of stores approved to accept the BasicsCard, particularly local stores (Puszka, et al., 2013), expanding the goods and services that can be purchased using the BasicsCard, and improving options for checking the balance of the BasicsCard (Arney, McGuinness, & Robinson, 2009). Individuals on income management can now check the balance of their BasicsCard in the following ways: online via their personal Centrelink account, free-call enquiry telephone line, at a BasicsCard Kiosk, in person at Centrelink, or using a mobile phone application (www.humanservices.gov.au).

The original 'one size fits all' approach to the original income management scheme in the Northern Territory was highly criticised as there was little consultation with the community, all welfare recipients in specific communities were required to go on income management, and the onus was then on the recipients to prove that they did not need to be income managed. The 'voluntary' component added to the 'new income management' scheme was also criticised as incentives such as being given a bonus payment may result in the decision to be income managed not truly being 'voluntary' (Mendes, 2013).

OUTCOMES OF INCOME MANAGEMENT

General impacts

In the small amount of literature that has evaluated the effectiveness on income management, findings have been inconsistent and the research has been subject to significant limitations (discussed above). Much of this research has either been conducted or commissioned by the Australian Government and has presented mixed results (Bray, et al., 2014; Deloitte, 2014; Katz & Bates, 2014; Mendes, 2013; Puszka, et al., 2013).

The SPRC evaluation of the New Income Management scheme in the Northern Territory failed to find evidence that the scheme had improved its targeted outcomes, including changing behaviour and spending patterns or improvement in overall financial wellbeing (Bray, et al., 2014). Instead, it found that income management appeared to have increased welfare dependency rather than reduce it as intended. Some workers reported that income management made it more difficult for individuals to control and manage their own money due to it not being all in one place and limited their capacity to manage their money and financial responsibilities in the long term. While some participants reported being largely unaffected by income management as they were already effectively managing their income, others reported that it was an inconvenience that made life more difficult. When participants were asked how income management affected them, a quarter reported it had made things worse, a third reported that it had made no difference, and two-fifths reported it had made things better. It was reported that many individuals felt shame, embarrassment, and stigma as a result of being on income management – particularly for some men in communities who would not apply for income support payments due to this sense of shame (Bray, et al., 2014). This stigma and sense of embarrassment or shame of being on income management and having to use the BasicsCard was also reported by workers in Queensland (KPMG, 2010) and Western Australia (DSS, 2014).

Voluntary income management in the APY Lands appears to have had a positive, albeit limited, impact so far in relation to reduced levels of financial harassment (although this has increased for some community members), and a small positive influence on substance misuse and parenting (Katz & Bates, 2014). Attitudes towards income management were generally positive, likely due to the community involvement in implementation, and some community members found income management useful for managing their finances and saving money. An evaluation of the Cape York Welfare Reform has indicated income management, along with additional supports and services provided, has encouraged recipients to better meet the needs of children and families, and improve their financial management (FaHCSIA, 2012). When asked about how the BasicsCard has influenced their life, 78% of participants reported it had made their life better and 12% reported it had made their life worse.

The outcomes reported in the evaluation of PBIM by Deloitte (2014) highlighted a difference between individuals on VIM and those on VWPR. Positive improvements in financial stress indicators and decreased tobacco and alcohol consumption were found for individuals on VIM. This was not found for individuals on VWPR, likely because they demonstrated less financial stress and alcohol and tobacco consumption at baseline than those on VIM. Individuals on VIM were more likely than those on VWPR to report positive outcomes, such as improved ability to manage money and decreased reports of running out of money before pay day or to buy food or pay rent and bills. Individuals on VWPR were more likely to report negative outcomes, including that it negatively restricted their spending, they were not able to pay for some things as a result of being on

income management, and that they felt judged and embarrassed whenever they used the BasicsCard. Individuals on VIM were also more likely than those on VWPR to engage with financial counselling, money management, and family support services – although a large proportion of both groups reported not receiving any services at all (58% VIM, 72% VWPR).

No significant differences were found on the level of gambling between the comparison groups (voluntary, vulnerable, and no income management), nor were there any significant changes from baseline findings on measures of child well-being (Deloitte, 2014). The majority of recipients on the VWPR measure had been automatically referred to income management by the computer system and not by an in-depth social worker assessment. Inadequate targeting through the automatic referrals is likely to be an explanation for why VWPR recipients appeared less vulnerable than those on VIM at baseline and had little positive change resulting from income management. The automatic system trigger makes an assumption of vulnerability that is based largely upon the age of the recipient and does not take into account the recipient's individual circumstances or financial management ability. Inevitably, this leads to the system capturing individuals already successfully managing their finances and/or who engage in few of the targeted socially undesirable behaviours (e.g. alcohol and tobacco consumption, gambling).

The few independent studies on the general impact of income management (Puszka, et al., 2013), and its influence on store sales (Brimblecombe, et al., 2010) and gambling using electronic gaming machines (Lamb & Young, 2011), provide less support for the ability of income management to influence the targeted behaviours. Puszka, et al. (2013) indicated that poor implementation of income management as part of the NTER had negative outcomes including centralisation of remote populations to larger regional centres (e.g. Galiwin'ku, Northern Territory), food insecurity, and further disengagement and marginalisation of people in remote communities. Brimblecombe et al. (2010) found that sales of tobacco and cigarettes, soft drink, and fruit and vegetables were not influenced by income management independent of the government stimulus payment introduced during this time. Lamb and Young (2011) found that, while income management did reduce the amount of money available for gambling, it was only associated with a reduction in revenue from electronic gaming machines in one pub – a finding that may also have been influenced by local market variation. These findings do not indicate the impact of income management on community card games or other forms of gambling. Previous studies also found no conclusive evidence on the impact of income management on gambling (Central Land Council, 2008 and FaHCSIA 2009c as cited in Lamb & Young, 2011).

Potential positive impacts of income management may be reduced by individuals determined to circumvent the restrictions of having managed funds (Bray, et al., 2014; DSS, 2014). This may be a reason why investigations into the effectiveness of income management have been inconclusive. Examples of this include the findings that some individuals pool their managed funds, share or swap their BasicsCards and PINs, gamble using their BasicsCards, swap groceries or other goods for money or restricted items, or get money from taxi drivers who overcharges a fare on the BasicsCard then returns the difference in cash (Bray, et al., 2014; DSS, 2014; Katz & Bates, 2014). Additionally, overall cash availability (e.g., wage incomes which are not managed) is likely to influence the impact of income management (Arney, et al., 2009). It is easier to make adjustments in spending to ensure restricted items can be purchased as the availability of non-managed income increases. This can be seen in the findings of Brimblecombe et al. (2010) that spending on restricted items was initially influenced but this change was not sustained. As a result, Arney et al (2009) report that income management may be insufficient to reduce the sale and consumption of alcohol and other restricted items among individuals subject to income management.

Child Protection Income Management

Research specifically regarding Child Protection Income Management indicates that its effectiveness was highly dependent on the circumstances of clients and may only have a positive impact on 50% of cases (Bray, et al., 2014). It was reported by Northern Territory Department of Children and Families staff that CPIM was more effective in cases where it was a tool used as part of a holistic approach to resolving a specific issue (e.g. alcohol or substance misuse, gambling) and where the client was engaged with the Department and willing to make changes. It was less effective in cases where the client is not willing to engage and make this commitment to change as they managed to circumvent the restrictions. These cases were less likely to be resolved, often involved further notifications of neglect or removal of children, and involve families with multiple and complex issues and who had long-term involvement with the Department. This suggests that CPIM may not be as effective as hoped for families who are most in need of support.

In Western Australia, CPIM has helped recipients in the Perth metropolitan and Kimberley regions meet the priority needs of themselves and their children and was seen as a useful tool in assisting recipients to stabilise their housing and financial situations so they could address other issues that may have facilitated their referral to CPIM in the first place (DSS, 2014). However, although financial counselling and money management services were offered, recipients were unlikely to use these services – particularly those on CPIM. Recipients became dependent on income management, were unable to manage their finances without it, and often slipped back into old spending habits when their period of income management ended. Workers reported that some recipients would create more debt for themselves by applying for loans which were approved because their credit ratings had improved as a result of reducing their current debt through income management. This questions the long-term sustainability of behavioural change and the effectiveness of CPIM in preventing potential future cases of child neglect. Similarly to Bray et al. (2014), the Department of Social Services evaluation concluded that income management should only be one component of a holistic program of support for families as many experience multiple and complex issues that all need to be addressed.

Despite its limited effectiveness for children and families with multiple and complex issues, some workers still believed that it is worth using child protection income management in case it does improve outcomes - even if only a little (Bray, et al., 2014; DSS, 2014).

A holistic approach

The conclusion that income management alone is insufficient in tackling the social problems that led to its implementation is common among many of the evaluations that have been conducted (Bray, et al., 2014; DSS, 2014; FaHCSIA, 2012; Katz & Bates, 2014). For example, despite aiming to tackle the issue of child neglect by quarantining income to better meet essential needs, the number of substantiated cases of child maltreatment (particularly neglect but not including sexual abuse) in the Northern Territory has continued to increase since the introduction of income management (Arney, et al., 2009). The total number of substantiated cases of child maltreatment in the Northern Territory rose by 44.5% from 621 cases in 2006-07 to 1394 cases in 2013-14 (AIHW 2008; 2015). In particular, the proportion of substantiated cases of child neglect in relation to the total number of substantiated cases of child maltreatment has more than doubled. In 2006-07, child neglect made up 22% of all substantiated cases of child maltreatment (137 cases; AIHW, 2008) but this number more than doubled by 2013-14 in which child neglect made up 48% of all substantiated cases of child maltreatment (665 cases; AIHW, 2015). This likely reflects the multiple and complex needs of children and families and the need

for additional services and supports to be offered along with income management as a holistic approach to addressing these needs.

Some workers reported that income management is most effective when individuals receive direct assistance from financial counsellors (DSS, 2014). Many service workers believed that financial counselling and management workshops that are currently voluntary should be made compulsory for those on income management in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of behavioural change and prevent further welfare dependency (Bray, et al., 2014; DSS, 2014).

Improved targeting for referral strategies are also likely to be more beneficial than blanket referrals (Bray, et al., 2014), particularly regarding auto-referrals to the VWPR measure, as they could lead to improved outcomes by allowing more resources to be available for, and directed towards, those who really need them. For example, currently the system identifies a potentially vulnerable individual who is referred and subjected to the VWPR measure of income management. Instead of being directly subject to income management after auto-referral, a consultation with the individual and assessment of their personal circumstances could be conducted to determine their level of vulnerability and whether income management is necessary. This would reduce the number of individuals unnecessarily being subjected to VWPR and the consultation may result in those who are vulnerable having a greater understanding of the process and increased willingness to engage and have their income managed – which appears to facilitate improved outcomes.

INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

While conditional welfare schemes aimed at altering behaviour in disadvantaged populations have been implemented across the globe (e.g. Opportunity New York City Family Rewards initiative, Self Sufficiency Project in Canada, Food Stamp Program in the United States), Australia is the first to implement an income management scheme focused on restricting the spending of core welfare income (Buckmaster, et al., 2012; Dee, 2013; Mendes, 2013). Internationally, conditional welfare schemes have been found to improve short- to medium-term outcomes in relation to health, education and employment; however, long-term effects are yet to be assessed due to having been implemented relatively recently (Social Policy Research Centre [SPRC], 2010; Mendes, 2013). See the [SPRC \(2010\)](#) paper for an in-depth literature review of international conditional welfare programs and their evaluation frameworks.

CONCLUSION

There is no conclusive evidence that income management improves financial vulnerability and outcomes for vulnerable children and families. The quality of research conducted to evaluate the impact of income management is low and subject to several limitations. As a result, the findings of these evaluations must be interpreted with caution and cannot be applied to wider populations.

Limited improvements in housing and financial stability as a result of income management allows individuals the opportunity to invest in behavioural change. However, the long-term sustainability of financial and behavioural change is limited as income management may result in greater welfare dependency and individuals often slip back into their old spending habits when their income is no longer managed. Potential positive impacts of income management may be reduced by individuals determined to circumvent the restrictions of income management which can be done in many ways. Additionally, despite aiming to tackle child neglect, the number of substantiated cases of child maltreatment in the Northern Territory has increased by 44.5% since the introduction of income management and the proportion of child neglect cases has more than doubled. Workers have reported many individuals on income management have experienced feelings of shame, embarrassment, and stigma as a result of having their income managed.

Greater support for income management and fewer negative impacts seem to be reported when recipients voluntarily sign up to have their income managed compared to when they are placed on a compulsory form of income management. Income management is likely to work best when families are willing to engage with additional services and commit to changing their behaviour. However, the most vulnerable families with multiple and complex needs and prolonged involvement with the child protection system are less likely to engage in this manner and do not appear to benefit from income management as well as would be hoped.

As such, child protection income management alone would not be effective in addressing targeted social issues or promoting sustainable behavioural change and should only be implemented as part of a package of services and supports providing a holistic approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable children and families. As there may be limited access to services in remote communities, the potential for positive outcomes may also be limited. It is important that individual assessments be conducted on welfare recipients prior to referring them to income management to ensure it is suitable for their circumstances and that appropriate services can be put in place. Considering the lack of conclusive evidence that income management improves financial vulnerability and outcomes, as well as the practical and emotional hurdles individuals experience while they are on income management, compulsory measures of income management in their current forms and in isolation to other services and supports may not be the most feasible approach to addressing child maltreatment.

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