

**Elaine Peckham's speech on Income Management and biography for the Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) Conference, April, Darwin 2011**

**Income Management session panel: Outcome Management and the Income Management story**

**Biography**

Elaine Peckham is a Central Arrente Mbantua woman. She is the founder of the Central Australian Aboriginal Strong Women's Alliance (CAASWA). Elaine lives on her homeland called Iteyepintye. Elaine has represented the NT at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance in Canberra.

**Speech on Income Management**

First of all I would like to acknowledge the Larrakia people on whose land that we are having this conference on.

Hello my name is Elaine Peckham I'm a Central Arrente woman from Mbuntua which is the Arrente name for Alice Springs. I now live out on my homeland called Iteyepintye West of Alice Springs. The land that I live on was given back to us when the land rights was in place and that was in 1976. In them days family had to prove by their songs, stories and dances that the land belonged to each and every one of us.

I would like to speak openly and honestly about the Intervention being myself a person that has lived with the Intervention. A time where our human rights were taken away from us.

I've been going through the Intervention, like many others as a mother, grandmother and great grandmother. I was on Income Management from the start of the Intervention until last year.

Today I speak for myself. We respect other Aboriginal people and some of us have different views on things like the Intervention and Income Management. But I do know that there are people that are hurting because of the Intervention and Income Management but because they are hurting it is hard for them to talk about it. It's not as easy as some people think for people to talk about it. Everyone has different feelings. Many find it hard to talk about. Feels emotional. You have to believe in yourself to talk about it so openly.

I went through the Intervention and know how it made me feel emotionally and physically and what it did to my health as a diabetic. It stressed me out. I had to keep very strong. I got the Central Australian Aboriginal Strong Women's Alliance started because I wanted Aboriginal women from Central Australia to have a voice, especially women who live with the Intervention. I didn't want something like that to happen to the next generation. We are not selfish people and we are thinking of the next generation, our children and their children through our cultural beliefs and our obligations. We want Aboriginal women recognised in Australia and internationally and not be at the bottom. We want to be on the same level as government. Talking straight talk together. Sharing the two cultures.

When the Intervention began I should not have been put on Income Management as I didn't have any children in my care. I was put onto Income Management regardless of me being a grandmother, responsible and someone who worked and looked after my family all my life.

People should have had a choice before being put on Income Management but we were not given that choice. We had no choice at all whatsoever. And it's still happening.

People should be assessed person by person. And that assessment needs to be done in a way that doesn't shame them and so that they can understand everything that is going on. For parents who are not sending their children to school and so they are on Income Management the person interviewing them should ask the parents the reasons why they're not sending their children to school and let the parents explain what those issues are

and how they can then help them, how they can accommodate them and support their needs. They should not be put straight on Income Management. It might not be what will help. If the person thinks that Income Management will help then this has to be their choice.

The person that's interviewing them could say "what do you think will help". The person interviewing might be unsure on how they can accommodate them but they can learn. And then they can look at how they can address the issues together and really talk it out and in a way where there's not someone in a higher position and one lower. They should sit down together at the same level. I think that this would be better for both people. Because what always happens is one person saying that they know it all and patronising the parent and the other person not really understanding what exactly what is going on, and then decisions are made regardless.

I know of mothers that are good mums but they're on Income Management because they're unemployed but they are wanting to do the activities that could get them getting off Income Management such as a computer course. But they can't because they can't get there because they've got no transport or childcare for their kids. It can be hard to travel to town, even for people in town camps. Transport is a barrier. And if I still had children at home you have to find someone to look after them so you can go to town. There has to be someone to care for the kids. These are barriers that need to be worked on.

Money management and budgeting skills are important for people and families but if people aren't doing the money management course then people offering these courses need to work out how to make the course more flexible and have more of an understanding of Aboriginal people. People who work with Aboriginal people really need to understand that Aboriginal people coming into a different environment, that they're not used to, will feel uncomfortable and shy.

There's barriers for people who live outside Alice Springs to engage with the course. How can people be accommodated so that they can do these courses in their communities and in town and get good budgeting skills?

Some people are feeling degraded by being on the BasicsCard. It takes away our self-esteem, they talk of wanting to build up Aboriginal people's self-esteem but it makes you feel worthless. It effects you mentally and physically. If someone is using a BasicsCard and they feel degraded it can't make them feel like being a good parent. If this is what they've got to go through. Tell them how to do their own shopping, what to spend it on, disempowering them in so many ways.

We thought that we were moving forward but this is bringing up things from people's past.

What the Intervention has done in the past and will continue to do to us is stop us believing in ourselves. Most of us have done nothing wrong and we have always been accountable people all our lives as far as I can remember. But we're feeling like we've done something really wrong, like we are bad people, and we are being put down. And now we are feeling it emotionally in ourselves and are hurting and are suffering from what the Intervention has done to us.

Please don't be judgemental of Aboriginal people and treat us as equals. And not have people try and divide and conquer us again. When does this stop? And we are really trying to work with the Government and not just sitting back. We are trying to meet the Federal Government half-way but they are not meeting us half way. They're not listening. They believe that they know what is best for Aboriginal people. But we know otherwise. The Government that put the Intervention into place after the Little Children are Sacred Report handed it on but the new Government should have looked at it more closely and considered what is working and what hasn't worked and address it.

Little Children are Sacred Report was important but the recommendations weren't followed.

People need to work with Aboriginal people in a respectful and honest way.