

KULUNGA RESEARCH NETWORK — ABORIGINAL CHILD HEALTH SURVEY

5948. Hon Shelley Archer to the Minister for Child Protection

I refer the Minister to the Report on the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey, carried out by the Kulunga Research Network at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. I draw the Minister's attention to Recommendation 15 of the Report, namely, 'Practical interventions should be available to protect the income for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in dysfunctional families, e.g. where it has been established that problems with alcohol, drugs or gambling in the household are diverting family income from meeting essential family needs. Such interventions could include the requirement that all or some of child support or family payments are made in the form of vouchers', and I ask -

Will the Minister advise the House what progress has been made in respect of this recommendation?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

Discussions regarding the use of compulsory income management as a case management tool to address child neglect are currently being progressed between the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Department for Child Protection, Departments of Indigenous Affairs, Education and Training and Housing and Works.

It is envisaged that a pilot of this initiative will occur in the second half of 2008.

What is being proposed by the Western Australian Government, together with the Commonwealth Government, is income management that occurs together with a stronger child protection system.

The success of this work is in part conditional upon passage of the Parental Support and Responsibility Bill 2005. In particular I have proposed amendments to that Bill to allow for a sharing of information between parental support workers of the Department for Child Protection, Centrelink and the Children's Court.

The aim is that income is managed in a way that goes towards meeting the essential needs of children, in critical cases this will occur compulsorily, but together with parenting supports the aim is that families will be able to manage their own income and improve parenting.

This system of income management, child protection and parenting services will apply to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families where children are at risk.