

ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK SOUTH AUSTRALIA



MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Punishing People Without Trial:

Why We Oppose the New Centrelink Amendment

Monday, our Campaigns Co-Coordinator **Samantha Skinner** spoke with Jo Laverty on [ABC Adelaide Radio](#) about the federal government's alarming new amendment giving **police and ministers the power to suspend people's Centrelink payments without a court process**.

As Samantha said in her interview:

"This amendment is one of the most alarming overreaches we've seen in years – it gives police and ministers the power to cut off people's Centrelink payments without a court process. It's another example of the government weaponising the welfare system against the very people it's meant to support."

The change was **slipped in quietly, after parliamentary inquiries into the main bill had already finished** – meaning no scrutiny, no consultation, and no transparency.

If this legislation were truly sound, it wouldn't need to be hidden.

The Anti-Poverty Network SA joins other organisations, including the **Antipoverty Centre**, in calling for this amendment to be **withdrawn immediately**. [Our joint statement](#) explains exactly how dangerous this measure is, and [InDaily's recent coverage](#) outlines how it undermines basic rights.

This law **tramples the principle of justice** – the right to know the case against you and to defend yourself before the state takes action that harms you. Instead, it allows **punishment without notice, without hearing, and without trial**.

It's not hard to imagine who will be most affected. People in poverty. Aboriginal people. Women fleeing domestic violence. People already criminalised or living on the margins. Someone escaping a violent partner could suddenly lose their income because of a police accusation, at the most dangerous point in her life – with no chance to explain, and no court oversight.

At the end of the day, no one should lose their income because of an accusation. We need a welfare system built on real care and justice, not control and punishment.

This amendment is **shameful**, and it sets a frightening precedent. Governments know that being seen as “tough on welfare” and “tough on crime” is politically popular – doing both at once gives them double the headlines - more bang for their buck!

But trading away the rights of poor and criminalised people for political gain is not justice.

At the end of the interview, the host read out listeners’ text messages, which only reinforced the point: governments gain political support by appearing “tough on crime and welfare,” even when it comes at the expense of people’s rights. Many voters are willing to trade justice for a sense of safety, but in reality, **lifting people out of poverty would make communities safer far more effectively than punitive measures ever could.**

The Anti-Poverty Network SA will continue to stand alongside those most affected by punitive welfare policies – and to demand a fair system built on **care, dignity, and due process for all.**

Further reading:

This [article by Amy Remeikis](#) in *The New Daily* makes some powerful points about how the criminal justice system fuels racism and gender-based violence, and how these new rules would only deepen those harms.

The *National Indigenous Times* highlights how the amendment quietly turns welfare into a weapon, bypassing courts and threatening the survival of people already living on the edge, in an [opinion piece by Tabitha Lean and Debbie Kilroy](#), coordinators of the National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls.

Online Version including audio: https://bit.ly/APNSA_PunishingPoor

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