

Review of Greg Marston, Louise Humpage, Michelle Peterie, Philip Mendes, Shelley Bielefeld and Zoe Staines (2022) *Compulsory Income Management in Australia and New Zealand: More Harm than Good?* Bristol: Policy Press.

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This book and related publications is a study of Compulsory Income Management (CIM) across Australasia. This review refers only to the NZ portions of this study. New Zealand's Youth Service was established in 2012 and is unique in that NGOs are involved in administering social security benefits. Recipients of the 16-19 year old Young Parent Payment (YPP) and the 16-17 year olds who cannot live with or be supported by their parents/guardians Youth Payment (YP) are subject to *Money Management*, where most of their benefit is quarantined and their benefit expenditures are monitored by Youth Service staff and then the coordinating Youth Service Support Unit (YSSU within the Ministry of Social Development – MSD).

The goals of CIM, indicated by political discourses surrounding it have focused on problem behaviour: addiction and anti-social behaviour, but also increasing employment participation and helping young people to break free from the 'cycle' of 'welfare dependency' and building life skills.

Louise Humpage participated in a decade-after study of CIM with the NZ portion Funded Uni Auckland support. The NZ study interviewed 20 IM participants, 16 Youth Service employees from nine different providers, eight welfare advocates or social service organisation representatives who assist cardholders and Six Ministry of Social Development staff and political figures. The study explores the lived experience of a group dependent on state conceptions of 'responsible' behaviour, and weighs up whether officially claimed benefits are outweighed by negative impacts.

YP and YPP participants work with Youth Services providers to access entitlements and obtain ongoing support and advice. The providers are contracted to purchase and coordinate budgeting/parenting programmes and refer their young clients to education, training, work-based training or other developmental opportunities. Otherwise these tasks would be carried out by Work and Income. Which often has a reputation for being punitive and compliance-based. Recommendations are made to the YSSU about whether YP/YPP recipients have met their educational, budgeting and/or parenting obligations sufficiently to be given a \$10 per week incentive payment – or be financially sanctioned.

One outcome reported is poor targeting: CIM has been applied to many with no history of the substance abuse, financial mismanagement or behavioural, and this was seen as unfair.

While participants were generally accepting of being in the programme, this may have been because all were young people who had little prior experience of the benefit system.

While all participants could access some cash, amounts were often extremely small, because of high board/rent costs and the low level of payment. Quarantining meant they lacked the control needed to make sure that regular load (etc) payments could be met with sufficient funds were available in their accounts, and that repayments went out on time. Since these included loans for items such as furniture, whitegoods and cars any difficulties had significant impacts on quality of life and participation.

cards were not accepted at any petrol stations, and few outlets would accept them when buying clothes and other essential items. Since Unquarantined funds were often spent quickly on basic goods and services, cardholders needed to apply for a higher cash availability but the approval processes were complicated and slow. This prevented quick action when needed items became available and also prevented some from meeting (often unforeseen) cultural obligations.

However, CIM ensured rent was paid on time and thus housing retained. Some landlords did not provide the services they had been contracted to provide, rendering card-holders vulnerable to poverty and exploitation. It did not seem that financial capability had been enhanced, rather dependence was entrenched. Participants depended on their Youth Service mentors to help monitor their quarantined funds since Card balances could not be readily checked via accessible places such as ATMs and internet access was unavailable or unaffordable for many. Delays before payments started lead to difficulties. Finally, participants did not always receive the comprehensive assistance they required.

The writing team concluded that the benefits of CIM were outweighed but its social, emotional and economic costs, although they are supportive of a voluntary IM scheme since IM is a help for some. What is needed as well is the provision of decent employment and training opportunities and ensuring accessible social services and affordable housing. This is a very useful study of a particular portion of the welfare system and its publication in book form is most welcome.