

# Justine Davis MLA

## Independent Member for Johnston

Alawa - Jingili - Millner - Moil

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### Media Release : CLP's Income Management Policy: Punishment Over Support October 6<sup>th</sup> 2025

Justine Davis, Independent MLA for Johnston:

"Today's announcement linking school attendance to income management reveals the CLP Government's fundamental misunderstanding of why children miss school in the Northern Territory. As teachers head back into the classroom putting their heart and souls into helping students thrive, the CLP is actively undermining their work by punishing families of the children they are working with.

Income management doesn't work. Decades of evidence tells us this. Multiple evaluations have shown it doesn't improve child outcomes, doesn't increase school attendance, and doesn't reduce disadvantage. What it does do is stigmatise families, create barriers to accessing services, and add administrative burden without addressing the root causes of non-attendance.

The Minister talks about "holding parents accountable" but fails to address why children aren't attending school in the first place. Where are the investments in:

- Safe, affordable housing so families aren't in crisis accommodation or overcrowded homes?
- Mental health support services for children and families?
- Transport solutions for remote communities?
- Adequate teacher numbers and resources in our most disadvantaged schools?
- Cultural safety programs that make schools welcoming for Aboriginal families?
- Early intervention support for families facing complex challenges?

The CLP is taking the lazy approach - punishing families instead of addressing systemic failures. You cannot income manage your way to better education outcomes.

This Government boasts about 328 students "returned to classrooms" through compliance visits. What they don't tell you is whether those children stayed in school, whether they're engaged in learning, or whether their families received any actual support.

Real solutions require investment, collaboration with communities, and addressing the social determinants that impact attendance. Income management is a blunt instrument that research has repeatedly shown to be ineffective. It's ideological punishment dressed up as policy.

Territorians deserve better than this recycled failed approach. Our children deserve a government that invests in their future, not one that punishes their families."

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