

## Welfare to Work is failing single mothers

On 29 October, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand launched their latest research “**Outside systems control my life**” *The experience of single mothers on Welfare to Work* at the 2018 ACOSS National Conference. It examines the lived experience of 26 single mothers subject to the provisions of the Welfare to Work policy and puts a human face to this reform.

“Welfare to Work has increased people’s obligations to receive income support,” said Stella Avramopoulos, CEO Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand. “Policy changes were framed as a way to raise employment participation, self-reliance and financial security with little regard for the challenges that families, especially single-parent families, face.”

This research shows Welfare to Work is not achieving its aims and, in most cases, is increasing women’s financial insecurity. “None of the women in our study were assisted with finding work, except one person who took on a short-term, part-time role,” added Ms Avramopoulos. “Jobactive providers were unable to link women with employment that matched their experience and skills or support their long-term career goals and aspirations.

“Nearly all participants reported having their payments cut due to negligence or poor communication between their jobactive provider and Centrelink, or due to inconsistent policy interpretation. Amanda, a single mother of two, said, ‘I’m always on the brink of being cut off because they keep changing their minds about whether I’m meeting my obligations or not.’”

Ms Avramopoulos said Welfare to Work is situated within a suite of other policies that negatively impact on women. “This includes the difficulties women face in accessing child support payments, their low superannuation balances, the gender pay gap and workplace norms that, for career-oriented positions, expect long hours.”

On 1 November, Ms Avramopoulos spoke at the public hearing of the Senate’s jobactive employment services inquiry. She argued that single mothers are being forced into making decisions that often work against the financial security and wellbeing of their households. This includes the impacts of family violence on them and their children.

**Read the report:** <https://goodshep.org.au/welfaretowork>

**Read the submission:** <https://bit.ly/2qkblOU>

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Caption: L-R: Dr Annie Pettitt, General Manager Advocacy & Strategic Partnerships; Stella Avramopoulos, CEO Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand; and Susan Maury, report and submission co-author at the Senate’s jobactive employment services inquiry.

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