

Our Ref: O-XXXX
Enquiries: Office of the CEO

Hon Matthew Swinbourn BA LLB MLC
Minister for the Environment; Community Services; Homelessness
7th Floor, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
West Perth WA 6005

Email: Minister.Swinbourn@dpc.wa.gov.au

Dear Minister,

RE: MANAGED INCOME ARRANGEMENTS - YOUTH OFFENDING, SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

I write on behalf of the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley following a motion carried at the Annual General Meeting of Electors held on 4 February 2026, requesting that the Shire advocate for consideration of a managed income arrangement, similar to the Northern Territory model, for parents or guardians of children who are not attending school and who are repeatedly engaging in offending behaviour.

Council has considered the matter and resolved to convey the concerns raised by electors and respectfully request that the State Government examine this issue within its broader policy and reform agenda.

The Shire acknowledges that income management and social security settings sit within State and Commonwealth jurisdiction. The Shire is proposing that the State take a more proactive approach to using its existing policy framework to refer parents of recidivist children and those children who are not attending school to the Commonwealth for income management. We understand that this process was used in the East Kimberley prior to the introduction of the Commonwealth's Cashless Debit Card program but has not been used since.

Local Context and Impact

The East Kimberley continues to experience challenges associated with youth offending, chronic school non-attendance and limited parental engagement in some cases. These issues directly affect:

- Community safety and public confidence;
- The viability of local businesses;
- Pressure on police and emergency services;
- Public infrastructure and asset damage; and
- Broader social cohesion.

Local government does not control youth justice or welfare settings. However, we are consistently managing the downstream impacts of disengagement and repeat offending behaviour.



Alignment with State and Commonwealth Objectives

Consideration of targeted managed income mechanisms – integrated with support services – could assist in advancing a number of existing government objectives, including:

For the Western Australian Government:

- Reducing youth offending and recidivism;
- Improving school attendance and educational engagement;
- Strengthening parental accountability and early intervention;
- Supporting safer regional communities; and
- Reducing demand pressure across policing, justice and child protection systems.

For the Commonwealth Government:

- Improving educational participation and long-term employment pathways;
- Reducing intergenerational welfare dependence;
- Advancing Closing the Gap targets relating to education, employment and community safety; and
- Improving long-term social and economic participation outcomes.

A carefully targeted model – applied only in defined high-risk circumstances and supported by case management – may assist in reinforcing the connection between income support, parental responsibility and behavioural expectations.

Northern Territory Approach

Electors referenced the current Northern Territory framework, which links income management measures to repeat youth offending and persistent school non-attendance within a broader reform package.

While Western Australia has its own legislative environment, elements of that approach – particularly the structured linkage between behaviour triggers and accountability measures – may warrant examination in a Western Australian context.

Any consideration would need to ensure:

- Clear eligibility thresholds;
- Integration with family support and diversionary services;
- Safeguards and review mechanisms; and
- Cultural and community consultation in regional areas.

Experience Following the Cessation of the Cashless Debit Card

The East Kimberley previously operated under the Commonwealth's Cashless Debit Card program. Community perspectives were varied; however, a number of residents and business operators reported perceived improvements during its operation in areas such as public order and household financial stability.

Since its cessation, some community members have expressed concern that fewer policy tools are available where persistent non-attendance and repeat offending occur alongside household instability.

The Shire recognises that income management alone does not resolve underlying disadvantage. However, in combination with education engagement, youth diversion and family support programs, it may form one component of a broader accountability and support framework.



Constructive Regional Partnership

The Shire is not advocating for a standalone or punitive response. We are seeking consideration of whether additional, targeted mechanisms could complement existing youth justice and family support strategies.

Local government can support State and Commonwealth outcomes by:

- Facilitating coordination between schools, WA Police, youth services and community organisations;
- Aligning community safety planning with State strategies;
- Providing place-based intelligence to inform policy settings; and
- Supporting engagement initiatives aimed at improving parental responsibility and school participation.

We would welcome further engagement with your office to ensure that regional perspectives are appropriately considered in ongoing policy development.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and for your continued commitment to strengthening families and communities across Western Australia.

Yours sincerely

Vernon Lawrence
Chief Executive Officer

