

13 December 2023

## **Statement of Solidarity with First Nations Communities**

Economic Justice Australia is a signatory of the community sector's Statement of Solidarity with First Nations Communities reaffirming our strong commitment to First Nations communities in their ongoing fight for sovereignty and self-determination.

Australia has a long history of subjecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to controlling and punitive measures under the guise of social security. This continues today in the form of income management, cashless welfare cards, Centrepay rip offs, unexplained debts and an overly correctional and complex employment-services system.

First Nations peoples continue to face systemic barriers to accessing and maintaining income support payments like JobSeeker Payment, Parenting Payment and Disability Support Pension. Many First Nations peoples don't even get through the door at Centrelink, let alone access the support they are entitled to, because of a range of circumstances including technological and geographical barriers and a lack of Centrelink outreach, awareness and basic community services and healthcare, especially in regional and remote areas. A chronic shortage of accessible legal help, especially for people in remote communities, means that adverse decisions go unchallenged.

This was true before the Voice referendum and remains true today.

Economic Justice Australia recognises that First Nations peoples have always had a voice and solutions to ensure self-determination. The right to social security is a recognised human right because it is critical to guaranteeing human dignity by alleviating poverty, preventing social exclusion and promoting social inclusion. Current measures often breach Australia's human rights obligations to enable access and maintain social security benefits without discrimination.

We stand with the community sector, and commit to:

- Solidarity and action with First Nations communities in their ongoing campaign for sovereignty and self-determination, including Voice, Treaty, and Truth-telling.
- Ensuring our own decision-making processes respect First Nations voices, leadership and right to self-determination.
- Developing partnership principles that ensure we are not competing with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations who are best placed to develop policy solutions and deliver services for their communities.