



Office of Hon Paula Bennett

MP for Waitakere

Minister for Social Development and Employment

Minister of Youth Affairs

14 MAR 2011

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email which I received in my office on 22 February 2011 about a special credit card payment system for all people receiving a benefit. You suggest that alcohol and tobacco be forbidden purchases.

You may be unaware that there is already a payment card in place where for any food grant that is made alcohol and tobacco are forbidden.

I would like to explain that a key principle of the benefit system is that benefit payments are payable to the individual who qualifies for that assistance. Your suggestion would require the Crown to make moral judgements about the appropriateness of each decision. Such oversight by the Crown would be highly intrusive and rob individuals of their freedom of choice. Spread across the entire benefit system, this kind of oversight would impose an enormous administrative burden and cost upon Work and Income. Most people do not receive a benefit for a long period of time and move into work as soon as they can.

It is most unfortunate that there is a small minority of income support recipients who do not use their monies prudently. I cannot agree that this should change the way welfare is paid or assessed. Those people are generally well known to Work and Income and are often under the watchful eye of other organisations such as budgeters and welfare groups.

Thank you for taking the time to write. I am always interested in receiving suggestions.

Yours sincerely

Hon Paula Bennett
Minister for Social Development and Employment