It is my belief that the western sentiment of ‘Money is Power’ is corrupt and hurtful to the poor. It encompasses capitalist desires of oppressing consumers under the veil of ‘Freedom of Business’. The idea that money is needed to obtain one’s daily needs is concerning. It is my belief that we should mandate that every man, woman and child are given the provisions to satisfy their needs. Many say that this is already accomplished with our welfare system but many issues are not addressed.

Our current safety net for the poor is the welfare system – which is a money based system. This system is very inefficient as, although many do not abuse their pensions, it is easy to do so. The main problem is that large amounts of money are unconditionally handed out to recipients. Australia does not have strict policy on how welfare payments should be spent and this is a major problem – it needs to be addressed.

I believe that the best system to adopt would be one that gives welfare recipients vouchers for items rather than money. These vouchers could be stored electronically on a card similar to a debit card. The main idea behind this is that the recipient will only be compensated for buying (or paying for) certain items (or services) that would be on a shortlist.

Items (or services) on the shortlist would be common items (or services) that are in use and serve a reasonable purpose. For example; a recipient would be able to buy bread or vegetables but not cigarettes or ice cream at the supermarket. This will help to ensure that luxuries are not being bought with welfare payments.

Under this system the compensated items (and services) would be grouped into categories. Each category would have a maximum expenditure limit so as to ensure that recipients are not abusing the shortlist. Limits may be imposed in different time periods (i.e. weekly, fortnightly, (b)i-monthly, (b)i-annually) to reflect the frequency of the items (or services) purchase (or use). For example, a food limit might be $75 per week, while a transport limit might be $75 per month.

I also acknowledge that recipients may need a small amount of physical currency for places that do not have a card facility and for things that are needed but are not on the shortlist. Therefore I propose that the recipients get a small stipend, however this should not exceed about $50 per week. This could also be used for recreation purposes, such as buying birthday gifts, attending a cinema and even going to small outings with friends. This stipend will make sure that recipients do not feel left out from society, whilst the limit will stop the compensation being overspent on recreational activities.
There would however be a safety net if a recipient required more compensation. If a recipient is able to prove to a Centerlink Officer that they require more compensation to live on, they may be rewarded extra compensation temporarily or permanently. If a recipient is rewarded a permanent increase in compensation then they should have their circumstances reviewed on a frequent basis (i.e. 3 Months).

My proposal listed above is made as an alternate to the Newstart Allowance and would also work for Abstudy, Austudy, Carer, Parent and Youth Allowances. It would not work that well for the Aged and Disability Pensions as the recipients are unlikely to return to the workforce and need a slightly looser control on the use of their payments because of that fact.

Hopefully, this will help Australia to become a better place for all.