

Cashless debit card especially harmful in small communities, punishes regional Australia, says AASW

The Cashless Debit Card stigmatises and punishes people based on their location and unemployment status, AASW National President Christine Craik said today. In its submission to the Senate committee inquiry into the Northern Territory Income Management Scheme, the AASW reiterated its opposition to the Cashless Debit Card for those on Centrelink benefits. The AASW maintains that the proposed expansion is based on a flawed evaluation which was discredited by many experts because of a lack of rigour. The AASW called on the government to listen to the experiences of the communities in which the card has been introduced. Ms Craik said, "There is significant stigma associated with the card and many people describe a deep sense of shame when they are forced to pay using the card. These may be people who have never smoked, abused alcohol nor engaged in gambling and yet are treated as though they cannot be trusted with cash. Just because they live in regional, rural and remote Australia," Ms Craik said. "The card imposes significant hardship because cash is still important in small communities. For example, the card prevents people from buying things at local markets, or buying second-hand goods. It hampers children's educational opportunities by preventing their parents from paying for their school excursions." The AASW is concerned that the Cashless Welfare Card is disproportionately harmful to the economy of Aboriginal communities. "It affects smaller Indigenous businesses who may not be equipped to accept the card. It puts at risk the independent Indigenous credit union, which currently provides banking services to remote Indigenous communities and is a major employer of local Indigenous people in its region," said Ms Craik. "What we have seen so far is that it significantly disadvantages Indigenous populations and undermines their right to self-determination, autonomy and dignity. The AASW therefore strongly opposes the proposal to extend the Cashless Debit Card." ENDS

Contacts

Angela Yin
03 9320 1005
mailto: media@asw.asn.au