

NCOSS position on cashless welfare card

December 2019

The Senate will end the 2019 Parliamentary sitting year with a debate on December 4 regarding the expansion of the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management to Cashless Debit Card Transition) Bill 2019.

The Coalition Government is seeking to extend existing Cashless Debit Card trials and introduce the trial in new locations, including Cape York and the Northern Territory.

There is no reliable evidence that restricting access to cash and banning the purchase of alcohol or gambling helps people receiving income support, or their communities. The cashless debit card restricts people's freedoms and privacy and it stigmatises people accessing income support. Recent surveying in trial sites in Queensland has shown strong community opposition to the Scheme.

NCOSS is of the position that addressing complex health and social issues through income management is a fundamentally flawed approach. Any program seeking to improve the wellbeing of people using income support should be co-designed with communities and include appropriate supports such as financial counselling, mental health supports, drug and alcohol services and other social services and resources. The cashless debit card should be voluntary.

For more information about the cashless debit card and the position of the Councils of Social Service on current and proposed trials, please refer to:

- Australian Council of Social Services Cashless Debit Card Briefing Note: [click here](#)
- Queensland Council of Social Service survey findings on the cashless debit card trial in Hinkler, Qld: [click here](#)
- Queensland Council of Social Service position statement on the Cashless Debit Card Trial: [click here](#)