



20 July 2018

Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee regarding the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Cashless Debit Card Trial Expansion) Bill 2018

Respect Inc is the state-wide sex worker organisation in Queensland. We write to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee today to express our opposition to the extension of the trial of the Cashless Debit Card.

Evidence in Australia and internationally proves the negative impact of Cashless Cards on people who rely on welfare payments. The Cashless Debit Card Trial forces recipients to shop in certain proscribed places, and without cash. This reduces people's quality of life. The card has a devastating impact on the ability for people to respond with flexibility to health issues, such as being able to pay a friend petrol money for a lift to a doctors appointment.

The Cashless Debit Card Trial disempowers people from participating in local economies such as:

- Fresh produce markets
- Handmade craft
- Locally made soaps and clothes
- Informal neighbourhood child-minding arrangements
- Cost-sharing for transport

This hurts local economies as well as putting Cashless Debit Card Trial participants in a situation of disadvantage. Respect Inc also questions the ethics of the unfair and biased monopoly the Cashless Debit Card Trial gives to the businesses that accept the card.

Respect Inc supports the findings of Queensland Council Of Social Services in their *Review of the Cashless Welfare Card Trial and Evaluation*:

.....addressing complex health and social issues, such as alcohol, drug and gambling problems, through the welfare system is **fundamentally flawed**. There is a lack of evidence of a causal link between people receiving income support and people with alcohol, drug and gambling problems... the Cashless Debit Card may further stigmatise welfare recipients in areas where there are limited economic options and has the potential to divide communities.

Brisbane
28 Mein Street
Spring Hill Q 4000
07 38351111

Townsville
118a Charters Towers Road
Hermit Park Q 4812
07 47244853

Cairns
7/24 Florence Street
Cairns City Q 4870
07 40515009

Gold Coast
4 Bay Street
Southport Qld 4215
07 56570857

Members of Respect have expressed to us their concern about the stigma associated with the Cashless Debit Card Trial:

Personally I would feel like people could tell I was on Centrelink by this [card] and be judged as a lower class person when out simply grocery shopping.

Respect Inc is also concerned about the racial vilification aspects of the Cashless Debit Card Trial. The Card negatively impacts the self-determination of Aboriginal communities in Australia. The Card is disempowering, takes away people's rights to make choices about their spending, has an impact on self esteem and further entrenches segregation and systemic racism. The Card also contributes to the atmosphere of institutionalisation and disempowerment in rural and regional Australia.

The Cashless Debit Card Trial has harmed, not helped, people who are already vulnerable, pushing them into barter-exchange situations as a result of not having access to cash.

Our members have also expressed concern for sex worker clients on welfare:

One of my clients is on Centrelink, he saves up to see me for a half hour session every few months. He is afraid that he will lose the ability to have his primary needs met. I know it will impact his self esteem and confidence. If the government want to improve people's job prospects, removing control over their own spending is not going to help.

Respect Inc thanks the committee for an opportunity to make a submission,



Elena Jeffreys
State Coordinator
Respect Inc

Brisbane
28 Mein Street
Spring Hill Q 4000
07 38351111

Townsville
118a Charters Towers Road
Hermit Park Q 4812
07 47244853

Cairns
7/24 Florence Street
Cairns City Q 4870
07 40515009

Gold Coast
4 Bay Street
Southport Qld 4215
07 56570857