

From:
To: [Community Affairs Committee \(SEN\)](#)
Subject: Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015
Date: Thursday, 17 September 2015 11:46:21 AM
Attachments: [Final WCRASMP Draft Phase 3 2014-2015 plan with agency responses.docx](#)
[Senate Community Affairs Statement Cashless Debit Card 3.docx](#)
[CDC Trial Ceduna 05_08_15 \(2\).docx](#)
[Parliamentary Key Points.docx](#)
[SKMBT_42315091609510.pdf](#)
[BTC Draft Plan - Literacy Review.docx](#)
[SKMBT_42315091612590.pdf](#)
[SKMBT_42315091613420.pdf](#)

Dear Members of the Senate Inquiry
Re: Social Services Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015

On behalf of Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation (CAC) I submit our submission which includes the attachments in support of the introduction of a Cashless Debit Card Trial across the far west region of South Australia.

In June 2012, Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation was appointed Lead Service Provider to facilitate the development and implementation of a comprehensive management plan to “Break the Cycle of Alcohol and Substance Misuse” across the western region of South Australia.

This initiative follows on from the findings and recommendations of the 2011 Deputy Coroner’s Inquest into the death of six Aboriginal people in the Ceduna area between 2004 and 2009. All of the deceased came from Yalata or had strong connections with that community. The Deputy Coroner found that severe alcohol abuse had “played a part either in the life or death” of each individual, as had “homelessness and rough living”.

I have also attached a document which displays a diagram depicting 67 coffins from 1976 to 1994 of people who have died from alcohol related causes from the community of Yalata. Of particular significance displayed on the chart is the death of 11 people in 1991. There was also a multiple fatality which resulted in the death of 5 people killed by an oncoming truck travelling on the Eyre Highway on Good Friday 1991. These people had just left the Yalata Roadhouse but understood to have been heavily intoxicated. I do not have any further statistics from 1994 to 2015 but am aware of several other people from Koonibba have died as result of driving under the influence of alcohol or another substance.

The West Coast Regional Alcohol and Substance Misuse Action Group (the Action Group) was established and comprised of key service providers and stakeholders of the far west region which operated as a reference group for this initiative. The Action Group worked in close consultation with Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation (CAC) to develop a comprehensive plan and in devising practical strategies based around supply reduction, harm reduction, demand reduction and leadership and governance. All members of the Action Group were very committed towards reducing the harms associated with alcohol and other substance misuse to ensure that all communities could enjoy safer and healthier communities.

As Lead Service Provider, CAC was committed in ensuring that the West Coast Alcohol and Substance Misuse Plan was community-driven and that an inclusive and collaborative approach was undertaken to reduce significant harm(s) caused to people as a direct result of alcohol and substance misuse in the far west region. Attached is a final report of the Action Plan Phase III

from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 with agency response.

Complimenting this plan, a local Ceduna Service Reform Committee has been established to consider and work through a number of the key recommendations. This committee is being facilitated by the State Department of Communities and Social Inclusion (DSCI) and made up of key service providers and agencies who are based in Ceduna.

As a region, Ceduna and surrounding communities have been plagued by excessive alcohol consumption or substance misuse leading to domestic violence, assaults and other type of anti-social behaviour . As a community leader I have lived in Ceduna for well over 40 years and have seen the problem of alcohol and substance misuse steadily rise since the mid-seventies. The new addictions are on-line gambling as well as people using pokies on a regular basis where people often lose most or all of their entitlements. We as a community know that alcohol use contributes to violence and arrests and creates community unrest in the wider sections of the Ceduna community including surrounding communities. There are intoxicated drinkers using existing services to sober up safely and receive meals only to source funds by other means to maintain their lifestyle cycle of harmful drinking on a daily basis. Little or no money is left to spend on food, personal clothing or family obligations to meet other basic living costs.

Many children are going without food and essential clothing and as a result failing to attend school or are subject to all night parties, potential adult violence (assaults), including domestic violence as a direct result of individuals having disposable cash and not meeting their daily or weekly living commitments

The CAC Board and Community Leaders see that the introduction of a Cashless Debit Card would eliminate a lot of the hardship many families are currently facing by limiting the availability of cash to spend on alcohol, drugs and gambling. Outlined below is a scenario on how an individual or single parent with children receiving a Newstart or Parenting allowance will have their payments made should the Cashless Debit Card be supported by Parliament.

Current Newstart Allowance per fortnight for a Single person in private rental

\$657.00 pf

Scenario (1)-Cashless Debit Card Proposal

80% Restricted

\$526.00 pf

20% Cash Availability

\$131.00 pf

Current Parenting Payment Allowance per fortnight for a Single person with 4 Children in private rental

\$2,131.00 pf

Scenario (2)-Cashless Debit Card Proposal

80% Restricted

\$1,705.00 pf

20% Cash Availability

\$426.00

This trial will not change the amount a person receives their payment only the way in which a person receives the payment.

Like many small to medium rural towns scattered across Australia, Ceduna is also facing a pandemic filtration of methamphetamine throughout the community. We all are very much aware of the destructive nature of “ice” or “wada” which is the local Aboriginal term used for methamphetamine or ice.

As a community we are seeking to reduce the supply of disposable cash to suppliers to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol and substance misuse. In 2013-14, there has been an over representation to the Ceduna Hospital Emergency Department exceeding 500 visitations attributed to alcohol and drug use including assault related hospitalisations which is believed to be 68 times the National average with the Sobering-Up Shelter receiving 4667 admissions during the same reporting period.

The West Coast Alcohol and Substance Misuse Plan developed is an evidence based plan, informed by experiences and evaluations of other communities dealing with alcohol and other drug issues. In line with learnings from these evaluations there is a focus in our plan on preventions strategies and actions. Young people, our next generation are a key target group in order to break the cycle of alcohol and other substance related harm.

Sadly over the past 10 to 15 years there have been several Indigenous leaders from the region who have died prematurely. We now have a gap between existing leaders and the next generation of young people and need to bridge this gap as well as protect and promote the next generation of leaders growing up so that they do not become vulnerable to the range of social pressures being placed upon them. We would to strengthen our Indigenous leaders and support our prospective leaders of the future.

In support of the introduction of the Cashless Debit Card Trial I acknowledge that other wrap around services need to be provided to ensure that people with substance misuse issues can get access to appropriate counselling and treatment services.

This package needs to be comprehensive covering a range of services and programs:

- Supporting people with Substance Misuse Issues
- Financial Counselling
- Improving the delivery of Early Childhood Education

- Opening up economic development opportunities including training and employment programs which run parallel to the introduction of the Cashless Debit Card. This should be a key diversionary reform program as distinct from the current “Work for the Dole” program. There needs to be meaningful training and employment if we are to reach and attain positive outcomes for our people.

As Leaders I strongly believe all previous efforts to address alcohol and substance misuse have failed but through the commitment of all spheres of government we have been given the opportunity to support this trial on the basis of all the evidence presented to reduce supply, demand and harm of alcohol and drugs.

Overall, Leaders across all communities in the far west region have been given the opportunity to work with Local, State and the Federal to help shape what we believe are adequate measures to ensure our peoples entitlements are not misused in manners that are detrimental to themselves and families.

This change has been made to specifically address our local needs. It has been a true collaboration to ensure that we give our people and our communities every opportunity to create real and genuine change in their lives.

As a group of collective Leaders across the region, we look forward to a fulsome analysis and review of the trials impact to inform further community based consultations and strategies to reduce the impact of alcohol, substance abuse and gambling on our communities.

Yours sincerely

MICHAEL HAYNES | CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation

T: (08) 8625 3210 | **F:** (08) 8625 2111 | **W:** www.cac.asn.au

39 McKenzie Street/PO Box 520, Ceduna SA 5690