



4 September 2015

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Attachments

- Yalata and Ceduna Councils tackle the challenging issue of alcohol - Let's stop the blame and work together
- Yalata Community: Healthy Benefits Card – Community Support Package

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015

Submission Authorisation

This submission is authorised by Greg Franks, Chief Executive Officer of Yalata Community Inc. The timing of the hearing will not enable the matter to be considered by the Yalata Community Council for formal endorsement but the submission is based on discussions with the Chairperson and previous Council meetings.

Yalata Community position in relation to the trial of the cashless debit card

The Yalata community support the cashless debit card trial conditional on the federal government agreeing to provide appropriate support for the trial.

The Yalata Community Council has considered the cashless debit card at Council meetings and the card introduction has been subject to formal community consultation, including a meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary Alan Tudge in Yalata. There is overall Yalata community support for the trial of the cashless debit card within the Ceduna region.

The impact of alcohol and other drugs has had a devastating effect on Yalata and community members in Ceduna for a very long time. The cashless debit card is seen as a positive step towards reducing the harm of alcohol and supporting families live better lives.

The Yalata Community leadership has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the other Aboriginal community leaders in the Ceduna region, the District Council of Ceduna and the Federal Government regarding the intent to trial the cashless debit card.

It is the strong view of Yalata and other Aboriginal leaders that the cashless debit card by itself will not address the problems caused by alcohol. The success of the trial will be determined by the other support measures that are implemented at the same time. These measures are being negotiated between Aboriginal Community leaders and the Federal Government. Key elements of the support package include financial counselling, alcohol and other drugs counselling, cultural diversionary activities, telecommunications upgrades, community administration and governance funding, economic development support, as well as employment and training initiatives through the Community development Program. See the attachments for the proposed support package for Yalata.

Yalata Community Inc

Community Background

Yalata is an Aboriginal Anangu community on the far west coast of SA 1,000 kilometres from Adelaide by road. At last census 295 people lived in the township of Yalata which is located on a sealed road three kilometres from the Eyre Highway. The community is primarily Pitjantjatjara Anangu (Anangu) who descended from the desert people in the north and north-west of South Australia. Their families were removed from their land prior to the Maralinga atomic bomb tests in the 1950s and resettled on the lands that became Yalata. Pitjantjatjara is the first language of the Anangu and English is the second language.

Like many remote Aboriginal communities, if the non-indigenous workers are excluded, there are few 'real' jobs. Employment rates are low, incomes are largely welfare based, houses are often overcrowded and there are poor English literacy and numeracy levels. Limited numbers of Anangu are licenced drivers, the school attendance rates are well below urban schools and there is a disproportionately high level of contact with the judicial system. In terms of health, chronic disease levels, including diabetes and heart disease, are high. There are limited social opportunities and zero opportunity for home ownership.

The 458,000 hectare area that is the Yalata Indigenous Protected Area is owned on freehold title by the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT), a statutory body established by the South Australian parliament. Yalata exists in an area outside of an incorporated local government authority. Since 1975 the Yalata community has been managed by Yalata Community Inc, (YCI), an incorporated association. YCI operates under a constitution. YCI is governed by an Anangu Council elected by the Aboriginal members of the community. Council meet monthly for a full day and deal with internal operational matters as well as the vast array of agencies that interact with the community.

YCI is central to the running of the community of Yalata. YCI provides all the essentials for the community. Services provided include municipal services such as rubbish collection, airstrip maintenance, community parks and streetscapes, operation of the power generation and water supply under contract with the relevant government agencies, community services including a Centrelink agency and internet centre, assisting community members manage their personal affairs such as banking or dealing with the courts, recreational activities such as a social club, youth shed, women's centre, sporting facilities and sports events, training programs, and caring for the 458,000 hectare Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) through the land management rangers. YCI also operate a caravan park, fishing and camping permits, and own the community store operated under a management agreement by Outback Stores. YCI is also the central interface with government, non-government and research bodies with an interest in the community.

The challenge of Alcohol

Yalata Community is a 'dry' community Aboriginal Lands Trust (Yalata Reserve) Regulations 2005 under the Aboriginal Lands Trust Act. That is not to say that there isn't a problem with alcohol and other drugs being brought into the community but in general the problems of alcohol are well policed.

There are however Yalata Anangu who primarily reside away from the community in Ceduna. These Anangu if asked where they are from would say Yalata however if asked where have they lived for most of the past few weeks, months and even years many would say they have lived in and around Ceduna. Mostly they do not have housing in Yalata and when in community rely on family to accommodate them. They also do not have housing in Ceduna. These Anangu generally sleep rough in Ceduna and by most definitions they would be classified as homeless. It is this group of Yalata Anangu who are the primary concern as heavy drinkers.

There are also a cohort of community members who when in Yalata are productive contributing community members but after a few weeks in community will be base themselves in Ceduna drinking heavily before returning to community to dry out. It is often commented on by service providers that they hardly recognise their 'clients' from Ceduna as the same person when they are 'dry' in Yalata.

There are also many non-drinkers and social drinkers in Yalata who are able to manage alcohol consumption

There is recognition that alcohol is a problem for Yalata Anangu. The Yalata community worries about family members dying far too young through alcohol related chronic health issues, sleeping rough, domestic family violence or as a consequence of road death.

This alcohol problem was also recognised by the Coronial Inquest by Deputy State Coroner Schapel in 2011 into the deaths of 6 Indigenous people associated with alcohol abuse and sleeping rough. The Coroner recommended:

“that the Commonwealth, State and relevant Local Governments recognise that chronic ill health and alcohol abuse poses a serious threat to the wellbeing and functionality of traditional Aboriginal communities and that it poses specific threats to the health and longevity of individual members of those communities.”

Action to date to reduce Alcohol Harm

The Breaking the Cycle program for the west coast had some limited success but did not achieve any major shift in reducing the problems of alcohol abuse.

In terms of reducing supply the licence restrictions on take away alcohol at the Nundroo and Nullarbor Hotel Motels had an immediate effect on stopping the drinker's camp at Nundroo but anecdotally shifted the heavy drinking to Ceduna. The ID required to purchase alcohol had a short term effect and may have reduced overall volumes but has not prevented abuse of alcohol in Ceduna.

Efforts to reduce harm have seen greater coordination of services in Ceduna to help those who are heavily intoxicated. Some of the improved services include the increase in beds at the Sobering-Up Unit, the Ceduna Day Centre, and the Ceduna-Yalata Bus. The Vulnerable Persons Framework has provide coordination of services to exchange information between services and to minimise 'over servicing' of individuals. There has been a meeting between the Yalata Community Council and the District Council of Ceduna to work cooperatively to address the common goal of alcohol harm. No action has arisen from this yet (see attachments).

There has been little success in demand reduction programs in Ceduna other than the success of the Ceduna Youth Hub.

Yalata Community Council has tried to address the alcohol challenge through its strategic framework (shown on the next page) based on the community vision of a **“happy, healthy and safe community”**. The strategic goals all contribute to a well-functioning community and in effect the goals support each other and contribute to a reduction in the demand for alcohol by having employment and activities that provide an alternative to boredom and further drinking.

The Yalata Community Council through the 'working community' goal had embarked on an Anangu Jobs for Anangu People policy that had seen significant job redesign that create employment for local community members. Prior to the introduction of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) and the changes to the Remote Jobs and Community Program (now Community Development Program- CDP) on 1 July 2015 YCI had contracted 48 staff with only 6 being non-Aboriginal. Unfortunately, 25 contracts were terminated as a result of the new funding structures with only 4 finding other employment positions in community. The other 21 people required to move to Centrelink payments to support their family income.



The contraction of the youth funding through the IAS has reduced funded support to provide school holiday activities only and has left the older youth without any structured programs of productive community engagement and increasing their risks of becoming involved in alcohol or other drugs abuse or becoming pregnant. The community is actively seeking alternative funding sources to support these young community members.

Increased community lighting has made the streets of Yalata safer at night and the ongoing night patrol has been restructured to have a youth support role and renamed the Yalata Street Beat. Issues with drinking or other illicit activities are referred to the Yalata based SA Police.

The CDP provider Complete Personnel work with the Yalata Community Council to provide work based activities for adults who have work obligations to receive Centrelink benefits. These 'work' programs were previously undertaken by the Yalata Community Council but the CDP funding model is has a high financial risk to the point where the Council are unwilling to sub contract to provide this service to community. The Remote School Attendance Strategy is also a program of the CDP provider.

The opening of the Yalata Social Club provided positive opportunities for Yalata residents to socialise after hours but this ended when the funding ceased under the IAS.

Support for the Cashless Debit Card Trial

Over many years there have been various campaigns aimed at addressing heavy drinkers in community and in particular in Ceduna. These have generally seen short term improvement however this group of drinkers has adapted behaviour that avoided various restrictions and continued to find ways of making alcohol available.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the federal government is a commitment to a trial of the Cashless Debit Card is a very strong statement of leadership by the heads of the Aboriginal Communities in

the Ceduna region and the basis of a cooperative approach to the trial process. The cashless debit card for those who are on Centrelink benefits is seen as the best option for restricting the availability of alcohol, drugs and gambling funds. It is the hope of the community leaders that the cashless debit card will improve the quality of family life, reduce family violence and stop children going hungry.

The expectation of Yalata community is that many community members will embrace the cash restrictions, as those who participated in Voluntary Income Management, to purchase food and other necessities of life to support their families. The variability to change the rate of 80:20 debit only to cash to those people who are not at risk of alcohol and gambling by a local panel to a 70% debit to 30% cash is a positive measure that will help engender support by community.

It is the view of Yalata community leaders, however, that the cashless debit card by itself will not address the problems caused by alcohol. While the cashless debit card will provide a new restriction to access to alcohol, drugs and gambling because of limited cash availability, as with previous efforts to address the ongoing challenge of alcohol abuse there will be ways around the restrictions.

The support measures that are implemented under the MOU will be the difference between the trial succeeding, or the trial failing, to make change for those most in need. Key elements of the support package include financial counselling, alcohol and other drugs counselling, cultural diversionary activities, telecommunications upgrades, community administration and governance funding, economic development support, as well as employment and training initiatives through the Community development Program. These measures are all necessary to providing the opportunities for people to change their lives away from alcohol. There are support measures that have been put forward for each community and these are being negotiated between Aboriginal Community leaders and the Federal Government.

Although not all Yalata community members support the cashless debit card trial there is an overwhelming majority see the card as a potential life saving measure which will have positive benefits to individual lives and improve the quality of life for Yalata community members and their families.

As Yalata Community Council Chairperson Mima Smart OAM said in support of the cashless debit card trial “there have been a lot of people who have died and a lot of people ending up in hospital because their life was destroyed by alcohol. Instead of being in Ceduna drinking people will now go home to be with their families and teach them culture.”

On behalf of the Yalata community the proposed trial of the cashless debit card is endorse as the best opportunity to support community members and address alcohol, drug and gambling problems in the region.

Media Release - October 2014

Yalata and Ceduna Councils tackle the challenging issue of alcohol - Let's stop the blame and work together

As Chairperson of Yalata Community Council and Mayor of the District Council of Ceduna, Mima Smart OAM and Alan Suter are pleased to advise that both Councils have met in Ceduna and have jointly agreed to work together to address the harms that alcohol is causing to Yalata Community members in Ceduna.

As Mayor Suter says "We don't have a simple solution as there isn't one. Working together however we may find ways that Anangu can help Anangu to break the grip that alcohol has on their community members in Ceduna."

"This isn't a quick fix but a new way of thinking and working to address the alcohol problem and build better relationships for the future"

Mima Smart also sees this as a positive step for the future. "This problem has been going on for a very long time and too many lives have been lost. We can no longer blame each other while our people continue to drink themselves to death. It hurts our community, our families and our children."

"What will our children's future be if we do nothing?"

Both Councils have agreed to meet again in early 2015 with the Ceduna Council being invited to attend a Yalata Council meeting. The K-9 Security Patrol team will also visit Yalata to gain a better understanding of the community and Anangu culture.

Maureen Mima Smart OAM
Chairperson
Yalata Community Council

Allan Suter
Mayor
District Council of Ceduna

Yalata Community

Healthy Benefits Card – Community Support Package

Prepared by Greg Franks, CEO, Yalata Community Inc, based on staff and community feedback as well as Yalata Council's expressed desires for the Yalata community

Support Package	Benefit	Priority
Support for community Management and Governance	The ability to provide coordination of information distribution and consultation regarding the card trial with senior staff, elected community leaders and the community more broadly is reliant of having skilled staff and effective governance.	A – Must Occur
Financial counselling in Pitjantjatjara by counsellors who will work with Yalata Anangu in Ceduna and Yalata	Will assist benefit recipients who struggle to manage their funds be better able to adjust to using credit and controlling their expenditure.	A - Must Occur
Diversionary programs for Yalata Anangu in Yalata and Ceduna led by Anangu which would enable knowledge to be passed down and strengthen connectedness to culture such as, hunting and fishing, men's shed, arts programs to be provided in all communities	Will provide alternatives to drinking or other antisocial behaviours and build pride in self and community.	A – Must Occur
Provide additional Alcohol and Other Drug counsellors and an alcohol rehabilitation services being provided on the far west coast.	If the card reduces alcohol consumption those people who are drinkers will need support to stay away from alcohol and rebuild their lives.	A – Must Occur
Community education before roll out of card with translation	The greater the understanding of the operation of the card and the reason why the card is being introduced will increase the acceptance of the card and reduce usage problems when the card is operational.	A – Must Occur

Support Package	Benefit	Priority
Provide grief and loss counselling who can work in Pitjantjatjara language	Loss & grief has been identified as a reason why many people drink alcohol. Counselling will help personal healing and can thereby reduce drinking.	B – Highly Desirable
Improved telecommunication services in Yalata as the current capacity of the 3G system in Yalata is being challenged by the number of smart phones, private computer use and cloud based administrative applications, including the RJCP system.	Will enable Benefit Card holders the ability to check card balances and complete Centrelink requirements online. It will also benefit the ability to operate the RJCP online administration.	An upgrade to 4G has been advised by Telstra will be occurring in the following weeks.
Support for enterprise development initiatives and training that provide real job opportunities with Yalata Anangu, this includes support for the Yalata Tourism Strategy, Palya Café Gallery and farming at Colona Station	The creation of paid employment generates person pride and provides household income. It provides the most effective strategy to value what they have and to reduce dependence on welfare.	B – Highly Desirable
The development of community social club & sporting facilities	This supports the provision of diversionary activity.	C - Desirable