

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

**PUBLIC HEARING – 18 MARCH 2019
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000166

Senator: Sue Lines

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator LINES: What proportion of those amounts that you've just spelled out to us has been paid to Indue?

Ms Pattrick: That's the card provider costs?

Senator LINES: Yes.

Ms Pattrick: They were \$14.832 million in total from 2015 to 30 June 2018.

Senator LINES: You said 'card provider', so that's the money that's been paid to Indue?

Ms Pattrick: Yes.

Senator LINES: Does that figure include expenditure on the income support payments themselves?

Ms Pattrick: No.

Senator LINES: How much would that be?

Ms Hefren-Webb: We wouldn't have that figure, I'm sorry.

Senator LINES: That's a Centrelink figure, is it?

Ms Pattrick: Yes.

Ms Hefren-Webb: Yes, and you'd have to analyse the payment history of every person for whether they have gone on and off payments. They're all different; some might be on DSP, some might be on parenting and some might be on—

Senator LINES: Yes.

Ms Hefren-Webb: We could do that, but it would be quite a significant piece of work to get it.

Senator LINES: All right. If you could take that on notice, that would be good.

Ms Hefren-Webb: Yes.

Answer:

To answer this question would require an unreasonable diversion of resources.

The \$14.832 million figure provided is for card provider costs only and does not include Government expenditure on the income support payments received by Cashless Debit Card (CDC) participants.

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Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000167

Senator: Sue Lines

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator LINES: Can you provide a list on notice of all funded support services, including when their current funding agreements end?

Ms Pattrick: Yes. Is that just those that physically relate to the cashless debit card?

Senator LINES: Yes. How do those amounts you just gave me compare to when the trial first began?

Ms Pattrick: That includes the first year. So, for example, in the East Kimberley, the first-year support package was \$1.559 million. The third-year package was \$1.625 million. With Ceduna, the first year was \$973,000 and the third year was \$1.053 million, so they have consistently stayed in a lower bracket.

Answer:

A table of support services in the Ceduna and East Kimberley regions is attached. The Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) are currently considering the extension of grants for 2019-20.

Ceduna region

Organisation funded	Project	Description	2017-18 funding	2018-19 funding	End date
Catholic Care NT	No More Campaign	Educational program for Aboriginal men to raise awareness of family violence, using sporting activities to engage.	DSS: \$130,000	-	30 June 2019 – project will be completed, no further extension required
Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation	Children and Parenting Services - Community Bus	The bus service supports a number of complementary government initiatives including school attendance initiatives (for children who are ineligible for free school bus services), promoting greater community participation, access to support services, and allowing people to reach home rather than staying in town. This funding contributes to operational costs including bus driver wages, fuel costs, and vehicle maintenance. The bus is co-funded by the South Australian State Government.	DSS: \$50,000	DSS: \$50,000	30 June 2019
Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation	Children and Parenting Services - Youth Hub Mentoring program	The Youth Hub runs a number of activities including after school care and activities; holiday activities and summer sports; family fun days; and community mentoring. The Youth Hub mentors young people and aims to increase the participation of family members to support their children in positive social activities (includes volunteer drivers activity).	DSS: \$110,000	DSS: \$112,500	30 June 2019
Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation	Children and Parenting Services – AOD Counselling	Alcohol and Other Drug Counselling Services provided via Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service.		DSS: \$25,000	30 June 2019
Koonibba Aboriginal Community	Children and Parenting Services - Youth and Community Engagement	This program aims to strengthen youth and community cultural engagement, and support family and community relationships through the delivery of knowledge camps and community nights.	DSS: \$70,000	DSS: \$95,000	30 June 2019
Oak Valley (Maralinga) Aboriginal Corporation	Children and Parenting Services - Youth and Wellbeing Program	This program employs workers to plan and deliver activities in a stimulating environment to develop children’s social and cognitive functioning. The sessions will help children learn to play, socialise, establish routines and keep them engaged. Activities are held after school on weekdays with some community events on the weekend.	DSS: \$90,000 PMC: \$30,000	DSS: \$90,000 PMC: \$30,000	30 June 2019
Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation	National Initiatives - Family Safety	This funding facilitates and coordinates a regular women’s group to provide a safe and culturally sensitive space for Aboriginal women in Scotdesco to come together to discuss local issues and identify priorities for their community. In 2018-19, additional funds were approved to hold two Cross Border programs.	DSS: \$20,000 PMC: \$15,000	DSS: \$70,000 PMC: \$15,000	30 June 2019
Yalata Anangu Aboriginal Corporation	Children and Parenting Services - Youth and Wellbeing Program	This program offers after hours school care and school holiday activities, kids club and youth shed, cultural days, camps and community events for children and young people in the Yalata community. This activity also provides mentoring to other youth support workers in the region.	DSS: \$80,000 PMC: \$30,000	DSS: \$80,000 PMC: \$30,000	30 June 2019
Yalata Anangu Aboriginal Corporation	Children and Parenting Services – AOD Counselling	Alcohol and Other Drug Counselling Services provided via Tullawon Aboriginal Health Service.		DSS: \$25,000	30 June 2019

Organisation funded	Project	Description	2017-18 funding	2018-19 funding	End date
Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation	Diversionary programmes	The purpose of this funding is to deliver a number of “back on country” camps and activities aimed to involve Aboriginal men, women and youth in Ceduna. The camps and activities act as engagement points for disengaged individuals across a number of cohorts and provide a connection point for other specialist services. As a key Indigenous organisation that delivers the Community Development Program and Local Partner services for the cashless debit card, they work collaboratively with community and participants to build resilience through participating in social and emotional wellbeing activities. This program connects with a range of specialist service providers based in Ceduna that support the activities.	PMC: \$90,000	PMC: \$90,000	30 June 2019
Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service Aboriginal Corporation	Alcohol and Other Drugs Worker	Provides assessments and referrals to support services for people who experience drug and alcohol addictions. This service was endorsed by the Far West Aboriginal Leaders group.	PMC: \$110,000	PMC: \$110,000	30 June 2019
Department for Communities and Social Inclusion	Street Beat Service	Mobile outreach team to patrol the streets and provide assistance to vulnerable people to access the services that will prevent the escalation of incidents that cause harm.	PMC: \$120,000	PMC: \$120,000	30 June 2019
Koonibba Community Aboriginal Corporation	Community Playground	This funding supports the development of an outdoor community meeting area and playground for community, families and children. Koonibba is an encapsulated community 30 minutes from a regional centre and has very few diversionary opportunities for children outside of regular school/childcare service hours. The funding also further supports a range of other services that provide outreach to Koonibba to engage families in a neutral area. The facility will also provide an area for children to play in a safe environment that can be readily monitored by the local community. On completion, the organisation will have ongoing responsibility for the insurance, operational and maintenance costs of the facility.	PMC: \$50,000	Completed	Completed
Tullawon Health Service	Alcohol and Other Drugs Worker	To provide assessments and referrals to support services for Aboriginal people who experience drug and alcohol addictions and in particular those who are at risk.	PMC: \$129,000	PMC \$110,571	30 June 2019

East Kimberley region

Organisation funded	Project	Description	2017-18 funding	2018-19 funding	End date
Anglicare - Wyndham	National Initiatives - Family Safety	This funding allows Anglicare WA to review the Third Action Plan from the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 and implement the recommendations from the Save the Children Australia Building Safe Communities for Women activity in the East Kimberley. Anglicare WA works with providers in the area to continue to build the evidence base on the intersections between children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect, and family violence.	DSS: \$90,000	Completed	Completed
Boab Health Services Pty Ltd - Wyndham	A Better Life (ABLe)	Boab Health Services is a not-for-profit accredited primary health care organisation. Its services include allied health, mental health, and an Integrated Team Care Program. The mental health team includes mental health nurses, clinical psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists. The organisation has a holistic approach to health and offers programs like singing and drumming groups, art therapy, back to country trips and school holiday programs.	DSS: \$242,000	DSS: \$243,000	30 June 2019
Joongari House - Wyndham	National Initiatives - Family Safety	This program provides individual assessments and tailored referrals to specialist support services, financial counselling, mental health, and support groups.	DSS: \$50,000	DSS: \$50,000	30 June 2019
Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC)	National Initiatives - Family Safety	This program provides early intervention activities with at-risk cohorts to reduce the likelihood of development and escalation of violent behaviours to the point where they are difficult to reverse. The program uses after school diversionary activities and week-end cultural healing trips with elders as a means to engage "at risk" teenagers in the juvenile justice system, affected by domestic violence, at risk of self-harm, substance abuse and low self-esteem or respect.	DSS: \$110,000	DSS: \$110,000	30 June 2019
Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation - Wyndham	A Better Life	Ngnowar Aerwar operates a community centre where social, health and learning activities are delivered. They also provide space for drive-in/drive-out service providers. The services offered include an alcohol and other drugs counselling program; a residential rehabilitation facility for individuals, couples and families; a sobering up shelter; a night patrol service; a safe house for women and children affected by family violence and homelessness; the Building Solid Families program; a youth Grow the Music program; and a horsemanship program for young people.	\$0 (used underspend of \$350,000 First year package - \$350,000	DSS: \$151,000	30 June 2019

Organisation funded	Project	Description	2017-18 funding	2018-19 funding	End date
Ngnowar-Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation – Wyndham	Children and Parenting Services	This program provides access to the entire community to a range of culturally appropriate activities which support the engagement of children and parents. Activities are provided on a monthly basis, with additional activities operating during the school holidays.	DSS: \$63,720	DSS: \$133,720	30 June 2019
Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service (OVAHS) - Kununurra	A Better Life	OVAHS provides comprehensive primary health care services to Aboriginal people in the Kununurra region of Western Australia. Preventative and public health programs include maternal and child health, women's health, chronic disease, sexual health, and a social support unit providing mental health and alcohol and other drug services.	DSS: \$325,000	DSS: \$326,000	30 June 2019
Wyndham Early Learning Activity (WELA)	Children and Parenting Services	This program includes parenting education and support, life skills development and home budgeting skills with the aim of supporting families, strengthening relationships, improving the wellbeing of children and young people, and increasing participation of people in community life.	DSS: \$100,000	DSS: \$100,000	30 June 2019
Waringarri Arts Aboriginal Corporation (WAAC)	Children and Parenting Services	This program provides activities that promote and celebrate cultural identity and link at-risk youth and others to cultural support, with the aim of supporting the social and cultural wellbeing of disengaged youth, individuals and families. Activities include youth justice and young men's re-engagement workshops; youth and community nights; and knowledge and art camps.	DSS: \$136,280	DSS: \$136,280	30 June 2019
Boab Health Services Pty Ltd	Adolescent Rehab Project	This funding supports additional services to improve access to drug and alcohol rehabilitation for adolescents who are currently unable to access age-appropriate services within the region. This investment will support young people to link up to the rehabilitation centre and support them when exiting.	PMC: \$250,000	PMC: \$250,000	30 June 2019
Gawooleng Yawoodeng Aboriginal Corporation (GYAC)	Child Trauma Counselling	This 12 month pilot aims to reduce the effects of trauma in children which is a product of alcohol misuse and associated domestic violence. Children and parents are provided with strategies to heal and reduce further trauma in their life – and reduce the symptoms which have the potential to have a life-long impact if not addressed.	PMC: \$125,000 across the two financial years		30 June 2019
Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation	Kununurra Youth Service	A community led pilot project	-	PMC: \$225,000	30 June 2019

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Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000168

Senator: Sue Lines

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator LINES: How many trial participants are there?

Ms Pattrick: I can give you the 1 March data. For Ceduna and surrounds there were 902 participants. For the East Kimberley there were 1,468. For the Goldfields there were 3,212. The figure for Bundaberg and Hervey Bay at 1 March was 1,345. That brings us to a total of 6,917 as at 1 March 2019.

Senator LINES: Given you want to put Cape York into this bill, what are the numbers there?

Ms Pattrick: We'll have to confirm those numbers. I'm sorry, but I don't have them in front of me.

Answer:

As at 1 March 2019, there were 117 Cape York Income Management participants.

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Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000169

Senator: Sue Lines

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator LINES: In the Goldfields, if someone applies for a variation to the quarantined amount, how is that dealt with?

Ms Pattrick: There is no community panel in the Goldfields.

Senator LINES: So you can't alter the quarantined amount?

Ms Pattrick: That's correct. As part of the consultation process during pre-implementation and implementation, the community panel was discussed with community representatives. However, the decision was made at that time not to have a community panel.

Senator LINES: Whose decision—your department's decision?

Ms Pattrick: It was the decision of the community representatives.

Senator LINES: Can you list the community representatives for us? You can do that on notice, if you'd like.

Ms Pattrick: That would be easier; thank you.

Answer:

Local Implementation Working Groups (Working Groups) in the Goldfields region were provided with information about how the CDC community panels could operate. However, none of the four Working Groups elected to establish one.

A separate discussion was held with the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Aboriginal Residents' Group regarding the community panels. The group decided against establishing a community panel. These decisions can be revisited at any time.

Individual names of Working Group members cannot be provided due to privacy reasons.

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Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000170

Senator: Sue Lines

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator LINES: Can you give us the list of the participants in the Bundaberg trial who were part of the consultation group that apparently didn't want a community panel?

Ms Pattrick: We'll take that on notice. I would need to go and check with the reference group members and seek their permission to provide the information.

Answer:

Key stakeholders and Community Reference Group members were provided with information about the Community Panel however elected to not establish one.

Individual names of Community Reference Group members cannot be provided due to privacy reasons.

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Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000172

Senator: Sue Lines

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator LINES: Advice for people on simple ways to save money include a recommendation to buy in bulk when things are cheaper, in the 'cut your grocery bill' section. Last week Woolworths published a one-day, online-only sale where frozen foods would be half price. Isn't it the case that cashless debit card participants would not be able to benefit from this kind of deal?

Ms Pattrick: There's no reason that participants wouldn't be able to benefit from that. They are able to use their cashless debit card in store at Woolworths.

Senator LINES: Why do you say that they would be able to benefit?

Ms Pattrick: Their card is accepted at Woolworths.

Senator LINES: Only if they have the cash component available to them.

Ms Hefren-Webb: That's true of any system—that you can only take advantage of a sale if you have the money in your bank account.

Senator LINES: If you're in Kalgoorlie or Bundaberg, for example, where you can't get that ratio altered, you know how much money you have, so it'd be highly unlikely you could take advantage of those sorts of snap sales.

Ms Hefren-Webb: They can use that 80 per cent at Woolworths.

Senator LINES: If you can't use it online, how do you do that? This was an online sale.

Ms Pattrick: Apologies, we did not realise that it was an online-only sale.

Senator LINES: Sorry; I did say that, but I beg your pardon if I wasn't clear.

Ms Pattrick: Participants are in certain locations where Woolworths does sell alcohol online. Participants are unable to purchase in that case, but we do encourage participants to contact the cashless debit card hotline to see if we can assist arrangements there.

Answer:

Woolworths is not currently approved for online purchases with a Cashless Debit Card (CDC) because alcohol can be purchased. Woolworths has advised it is investigating a solution which would allow the CDC to be used at its online stores, but for non-restricted items only. Participants can call the CDC hotline for assistance with online shopping.

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Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000173

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: In terms of the participants, are you able to provide a breakdown of the participants into male and female?

Ms Pattrick: I don't have that information to hand. I am able to take that on notice.

Answer:

The data in the table below is as at 1 March 2019. Bundaberg and Hervey Bay data only includes those participants who commenced before 1 March 2019.

	Ceduna	East Kimberley	Goldfields	Bundaberg and Hervey Bay	Total
Female	472 (52.3%)	855 (58.6%)	1,870 (58.2%)	539 (40.1%)	3,736 (54%)
Male	430 (47.7%)	603 (41.4%)	1,342 (41.8%)	806 (59.9%)	3,181 (46%)

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Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000177

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: I want to go back to services. You gave us the figures for services for Ceduna and EK. Are you able to give them to us for the Goldfields and for the Hinkler trial?

Ms Pattrick: Yes. In the Goldfields, in addition to providing funding for services to assist people to transition onto the card, there was the provision of \$125,000 to Centrecare to help CDC participants better manage their finances. There has also been a commitment made by government of \$1 million. We're currently working with the Western Australian government on the joint investment for Stronger Places, Stronger People. Also recently announced was \$1.5 million for Goldfields Rehabilitation Services through the Community Health and Hospitals Program.

Senator SIEWERT: What's that designed for?

Ms Pattrick: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Wouldn't that just be normal health investment? How is it not just normal health investment?

Ms Hefren-Webb: We'll come back to you, but I understand it is additional. We'll come back to you with the detail on that.

Answer:

The Department of Health is providing additional funding of \$1.5 million over the next twelve months to the Goldfields Rehabilitation Service Inc., which includes \$785,000 for start-up costs, and \$770,000 to enable a further seven beds in the facility to become operational. This funding is provided under the Community Health and Hospitals Program, and is in addition to existing funding provided under the Drug and Alcohol Program and through Primary Health Networks for drug and alcohol treatment services.

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Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000178

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you. We've had quite a lot of feedback on services or lack thereof and also the lateness in funding them. Is the provision of the services that we've just been talking about—services for EK and Ceduna—coming from DSS, IAS or a mixture?

Ms Hefren-Webb: A mixture. I won't read through a very long table, but we could perhaps provide it on notice. It gives you the sense of funding depth. The majority of funding is probably DSS, but PM&C is certainly funding some of those services.

Senator SIEWERT: Okay. If you could provide the most up to date, that would be very much appreciated.

Answer:

Please refer to question on notice SQ19-000167.

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Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Services (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

Question reference number: SQ19-000179

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: I know we're going to run out of time in a minute. I want to go to the evaluation processes. I did ask quite a bit about the baseline Goldfields one during estimates, so I won't repeat those questions, but I would like to ask: can we have the terms of reference for the baseline survey for the Goldfields and for the Bundaberg Hinkler region—the one that was already released during February but also the one that's now being undertaken in the Bundaberg-Hervey Bay area or the Wide Bay area—and also the terms of reference that have been developed for the impact evaluation?

Mr Brown: We won't have that material. I don't have that material with me today, but we could provide that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Sorry. I meant on notice. I beg your pardon.

Mr Brown: Yes. It may not be technically terms of reference. We might use slightly different language, but it'll be the objectives, what the scope is and those kinds of things.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, thank you for clarifying that. It's whatever you've called the objectives of the study—the one that has already been carried out and the ones that are being carried out now or for which the tender is being let now.

Mr Brown: Yes, I'm happy to do that.

Answer:

Cashless Debit Card (CDC) Goldfields baseline data collection

The objectives and scope of the CDC Goldfields baseline data collection were:

- Collecting baseline data from trial participants and other relevant stakeholders to assess the conditions within Goldfields before or just after the introduction of the trial.

- Methodological work to design and test a robust and integrated evidence framework allowing the use of multiple data types and sources and allow for the possibility of a full longitudinal impact evaluation of the CDC trials.

Cashless Debit Card (CDC) impact evaluation (Ceduna, East Kimberley and Goldfields)

The independent impact evaluation seeks to understand ‘what works, for whom, when and in what circumstance’. The impact evaluation is designed to provide evidence that will enable the following six key evaluation questions to be answered:

1. What are the anticipated outcomes from the CDC and what are the current understandings and evidence regarding key pathways, mechanisms and assumptions that underpin these, for each location?
2. What outcomes both intended and unintended have been observed from the CDC to date in each of the three sites, including:
 - a. Anticipating how first round effects from the CDC (reduced spending and consumption on alcohol, illegal drugs and gambling) occurred, and if so, how have these interacted?
 - b. Assessing how these contribute to secondary round effects (increased spending on groceries, basic household goods and paying bills).
 - c. Assessing tertiary impacts (reduced violence and crime in CDC sites, increased economic participation from CDC participants and reduced social security spending).
3. What is the current community sentiment regarding the CDC, and has this changed over time?
4. How do perceptions of the CDC’s impacts (both positive and negative) align with the available data?
5. What other dynamics and factors may be influencing (both positively and negatively) the outcomes observed to date?
6. What is the feasibility of establishing a longitudinal dataset to understand medium-to-long term effects of the CDC?

The independent impact evaluation is underpinned by three inter-connected methodologies supported by a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy:

- The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy includes an initial visit to each location to meet stakeholders to introduce the project, initiate interview recruitment processes and ensure all local research and cultural approval processes are met.
- This is followed by subsequent visits to undertake interviews and further consultation.

The independent impact evaluation will triangulate findings from a number of data sources:

- A wave of qualitative data collection, with a current target of 200 stakeholders and participants (in total) across the three sites.
- A quantitative survey of CDC participants, with a target of 1300 respondents (in total) across the three sites.
- Analysis of relevant administrative data from both before and after implementation of the CDC. This will include Australian Government data and state government data.

Cashless Debit Card (CDC) Bundaberg and Hervey Bay baseline data collection

The objectives and scope of the CDC Bundaberg and Hervey Bay baseline data collection are:

- To establish the foundation for sound, rigorous evidence based information and knowledge in respect of the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region.
- This will be achieved through establishing a baseline of conditions in the area prior to participants commencing on the CDC.
- To align with the framework being established for potential longitudinal studies of the CDC in each of the three other CDC locations.

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Question reference number: SQ19-000180

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 March 2019

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: There seems to have been a spike in the number of calls to the income management hotline over the previous recording period. At the time DHS couldn't address that, but from your perspective there were a number of missed calls, which I think was an anomaly, but there were also a high number during that period that were actually down as answered. Have you looked into that? Have you spoken to DHS about that?

Ms Hefren-Webb: No. Can you just clarify which period you're talking about. Are you talking about the last six months?

Senator SIEWERT: I'm pretty certain it was almost up to date. This was during February estimates, and of course they come after you, so, once we saw the figures, I wasn't able to ask you some questions about it. But it was a significantly higher proportion of phone calls that were coming into the hotline about general income management and queries about the card.

Ms Hefren-Webb: Off the top of our heads—everyone's shaking their head here—we can't think of a particular reason why there would have been a spike, but we will go and get in touch with DHS to see what can be done.

Senator SIEWERT: So that obviously hasn't been raised with you. It was for the last period. I must admit, I don't have it in front of me. You know how every estimates we get an update on the table of missed calls and the number of calls that have come in on the various lines?

Ms Hefren-Webb: Yes, I know what you mean. We will have a further look. We've had a surge to the CDC call centre with the Bundaberg-Hervey Bay people coming on, but you're saying this is the income management line. Off the top of my head I can't think of what the reasons would be for that. We can have a look.

Answer:

The Department of Social Services contacted the Department of Human Services to seek advice regarding this question.

The Department of Human Services advised there were no observed spikes in the Income Management answered or abandoned calls during the period 1/7/2018 to 31/1/2019. Demand has reduced in the Income Management line as more calls are handled holistically within the BasicsCard line.

Please direct any further questions on this matter to the Department of Human Services.