



6th March 2019

The Community Affairs Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

To whom it may concern

**RE: INQUIRY INTO THE SOCIAL SECURITY (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT
(INCOME MANAGEMENT AND CASHLESS WELFARE) BILL 2019**

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder (the City) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019.

The City is a strong advocate for the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) trial in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. This is founded on the ability of the CDC to address significant socio-economic issues in our community and our first-hand exposure to the benefits of the card both locally and in other trial sites across Australia.

As you may be aware, the City is a significant contributor to state and national economy with more than \$9 billion annually in resources sector outputs. The City offers some of the highest-paying salaries in the country but the attraction and retention of residents to the region remains a key challenge.

The City's aspirations for economic growth are further inhibited by high levels of welfare dependency and the flow-on impacts of illicit drug use, gambling and alcoholism across the community.

It is our view that Government welfare payments, in an unrestricted cash form, further entrenches levels of disadvantage for people with addictive behaviours. An intervention mechanism such as the CDC is a catalyst for better outcomes in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, given its ability to restrict products prone to misuse by welfare participants.

Counteracting the negative impacts of illicit drug use, gambling, alcoholism, and associated crime, violence and antisocial behaviour in our streets requires coordinated effort. Additionally it requires integrated service delivery; improved government policy; collaboration with law enforcement, front-line services and other community stakeholders; and the creation of new economic opportunities for all members of the community.



The City is actively working in this sphere through the introduction of a four-person community street patrol, economic development projects, facilitation of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Liquor Accord, meetings with Police, participation in heads of agency and district leadership forums, the development of a safe night time economy and many other activities falling outside our standard remit.

It is early days, however the CDC is already having positive impacts in Kalgoorlie-Boulder and contributing to these broader efforts. There is clearly opposition to the card in the media, yet overall conditions are improving in the City and the majority of the population remains overwhelmingly positive towards the card.

This is evidenced further by direct feedback from participants accessing local shopfronts who report better levels of income management and child wellbeing, and reductions family violence due to the restrictive nature of purchases permissible on the card.

Our view is the CDC program should be extended indefinitely. At minimum, the CDC should be extended for a sufficient period of time to cultivate a causal evidence base to demonstrate it is working effectively in the Goldfields region; a period we believe to be no less than five (5) years.

Further it remains essential for the CDC to be extended into Tjuntjuntjara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (the Lands) given the detrimental impacts itinerant travellers have on Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Visitors from the Lands often camp illegally and place immense pressure the City's resources due to excessive consumption of substances otherwise prohibited by the CDC.

Without the extension of the CDC to the Lands, the true advantages of the card will not be experienced.

I encourage the Committee to observe first-hand the positive impacts the card is having in our City. While it is not a panacea, the CDC remains a key link in the pursuit of a healthier and prosperous future for the City.

Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours sincerely 

John Walker
Chief Executive Officer