



31 March 2023

Committee Secretariat
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
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Dear Secretariat

Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Bill 2023 [Provisions]

Minderoo Foundation is pleased to make this submission.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge the positive step this legislation provides to replace the BasicsCard with the Smartcard, providing a far simpler user experience. Improved technology and user experience was one of the key issues identified in the 2021 report *The Cashless Debit Card: Lessons learnt and future technology opportunities*. As reported recently by *The Australian*, Australia is rapidly becoming a cashless society and this process is well underway. Access to continued technology improvements that match market improvements destigmatises cashless welfare arrangements ensuring they are indistinguishable from any other card user. Minderoo Foundation considers these improvements are critical to the health and prosperity of these communities.

We also acknowledge the \$25m funding *announcement* to support former CDC communities with strengthening their local services. However, we share the concerns of Cashless Debit Card (CDC) communities the hasty and expensive implementation of what is essentially a rebrand has come at the cost of health and safety for some of the most vulnerable Australians.

Insight from our ongoing community engagement and recent media from East Kimberley and the Goldfields by *The Australian* and *The West Australian* report an alarming rise in alcohol fuelled violence and crime and a sharp increase in students using breakfast club programs and emergency lunches at school. It is clear some who have opted out of the program have not maintained financial choices that support the health and wellbeing of their families and community.

Creating Parity outlined the CDC as one of 27 recommendations to eliminate disparity and improve outcomes in our vulnerable communities, including the detrimental impact of drugs and alcohol on children and families. The CDC was never intended to be a tool in isolation.



The Federal Government, at the time, made a commitment to provide further investment into wrap around support services to complement the CDC roll out, however this wasn't delivered.

Minderoo Foundation would see the following as critical next steps:

- Genuine consultation informing the Commonwealth's approach to funding and contracting.
- Communities leading decision-making about priorities and activation of local service plans.
- Consideration given to the medium to longer-term needs of these communities to ensure commitment remains beyond the current term of politics.

Today, a significant gap still remains. The CDC alone did not close it, and neither will the SmartCard without considered and long-term investment into addressing underlying causes of disparity.

Yours faithfully,

Louise Olney
Director, Building Communities
Minderoo Foundation

ABOUT MINDEROO FOUNDATION

Established by Andrew and Nicola Forrest in 2001, Minderoo Foundation is one of Australasia's largest philanthropies, with more than AUD\$2.6 billion in funds invested in philanthropic causes.

Minderoo Foundation supports a range of initiatives, including eliminating childhood cancer, improving early childhood education, creating Indigenous employment parity, supporting arts and culture, ending modern slavery, and driving accountability and responsibility for global overfishing, plastic pollution, gender equity, global warming, and the tech ecosystem.

Through a collaborative, evidence-based approach we strive to challenge the impossible through our 11 key initiatives, which include Thrive by Five, Generation One, Arts & Culture and Walk Free, among others.