

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2015-16 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 1.4 Income Support for People in Special Circumstances

Question No: SQ16-000013

Topic: Cashless Debit Card

Hansard page: Written

Senator Rachel Siewert asked:

Cashless debit card implementation:

- a. What progress has been made on the \$1 million in additional support services that were promised? How is that being rolled out in Ceduna?
- b. What is the status of the community body? Will it be possible to make appeals to an independent authority to review decisions by the community body?
- c. Has a long-form Regulation Impact Statement been completed in relation to the cashless debit card? If so, please provide a copy.
- d. What is the cost and replacement process if someone loses a card in Ceduna?
- e. Can the Department confirm whether trial participants will be able to access their funds if electronic infrastructure isn't working – due to power outages or broken satellite linkages in remote areas?
- f. Is the Welfare Debit Card Taskforce still in place in DSS? What is the staffing at each level (SES, EL, APS), including any secondees? How long is the taskforce expected to remain in place?

Answer:

- a. Negotiations with providers have been undertaken, and contracts been executed. All support services have commenced operation.
- b. Once the community panel makes a preliminary decision, the applicant will have 21 days to respond (if they choose to) before a final decision is made. Following this, at any time, the applicant can request that the panel reconsider a decision, or alternatively may lodge a new application. There will also be a complaints mechanism whereby applicants can provide feedback to the panel.

The community panel's decision is reviewable under the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977.

c. No.

d. Participants can report a lost or stolen card via phone, online or in person with a local partner. Indue will replace the card at no cost to the participant. Participants who lose their card and require access to emergency funds will be able to collect a temporary replacement card from within the community. These emergency replacement cards will work immediately. Trial participants will also be issued with a permanent replacement card.

If a trial participant loses their card outside the trial location, they will be able to request a permanent replacement card. Participants will continue to have access to online banking while they await their new card.

e. In the event of either a technological fault or malfunction with a participant's cashless debit card or welfare restricted bank account, or in the event of a natural disaster, a participant's amount of restricted funds can be varied to zero per cent. This means 100 per cent of welfare payments would be directed to a participant's primary bank account (rather than the cashless debit card) and welfare restrictions would not apply. When the emergency event is over, the restricted proportion would be returned to the individual's previous rate of between 50 and 80 per cent.

This would provide a mechanism for participants to be able to access their funds in circumstances where power outages or broken satellite linkages meant that a participant could not use their cashless debit card or access their account.

f. The functions of the Welfare Debit Card Taskforce have been absorbed into the Financial and Specialist Support (FASS) Branch. The FASS Branch administers programmes and services for adults to support them through difficult financial times and help build financial capability to improve their financial stability and future outcomes. All duties previously undertaken by the Taskforce are now managed by this Branch.