

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO**  
**2017-18 Budget Estimates Hearings**

**Outcome Number: 2.1 Families and Communities**

**Question No: SQ17-000306**

**Topic: Expansion of cashless welfare card trial**

**Hansard page: Written**

**Senator Larissa Waters asked:**

1. There is currently a trial planned for Bundaberg – is that right?
2. What’s the process you go through to set the geographic boundaries for that trial– can you tell us where they’ll be?
3. There’s a huge amount of concern in the Hinkler electorate about this – in Hervey Bay in particular. Can you tell us here what the geographical boundaries will be?
4. The timeline is that the trial will start in September – is that correct – is it due to coincide with a drug testing trial? Is it the intention to implement those trials together?
5. My understanding is that there needs to be a level of community support demonstrated before a trial can proceed – how are you finding out whether the community there supports the trial?
6. Why does the government think it’s fair to push this card on to people and punish them in a place where there are very few jobs available for people to shift into?

**Answer:**

1 to 4. The 2017 Federal Budget provided funding to implement the Cashless Debit Card in two additional locations. No decision has been made on the location or timing of the two additional sites. The Government is having discussions with a number of communities which have expressed an interest in the Cashless Debit Card as a tool to help address the harm associated with drugs, alcohol and gambling. There is no intention to implement the drug trials at the same time as the Cashless Debit Card in the two new locations. The drug trial will commence in January 2018 in three locations.

5. The two new Cashless Debit Card locations will be selected based on several factors, including community support, high-levels of disadvantage and welfare dependence, and high-levels of social harm caused by alcohol, drugs and gambling.

The Government is having discussions with a range of stakeholders, including community leaders, business leaders, church leaders, welfare organisations and local government to determine whether there is support for the Cashless Debit Card in particular communities.

6. The Government is looking at the best ways to support communities where many people are receiving welfare payments, and where alcohol, gambling and drug use are causing harm. The Cashless Debit Card is not a punitive measure and does not change the amount of welfare payments a person receives.