

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: SQ17-000425

Topic: Income Management

Hansard page: 80

Senator Rachel Siewert asked:

Merchant/s have claimed that they are losing money in the trial sites due to laybys on the cashless debit card. Please provide the reasons stated and the outcome achieved from the discussion with such merchant/s, including the timeframe.

Answer:

The Department is aware of only one merchant claiming that the introduction of the Cashless Debit Card has caused financial disadvantage. On 5 May 2017, these claims were detailed in an article in the Guardian in which the merchant was quoted extensively and identified. The merchant, Ceduna Homescene & Outdoors, claimed that the introduction of the Cashless Debit Card altered the obligation of welfare recipients to honour Centrepay arrangements. This is not the case. All welfare recipients can cancel Centrepay deductions at any time. Participants on the Cashless Debit Card program have exactly the same access to Centrepay as other welfare recipients.

On 26 June 2017, a representative of the Department met with the owners of Ceduna Homescene & Outdoors, Malcolm and Sharon Spry. The Department's representative explained the Centrepay service to Mr and Mrs Spry and outlined that Centrepay arrangements are not impacted by the Cashless Debit Card program. The Department had attempted to meet with Mr and Mrs Spry on previous occasions.

The Department will continue to work with all merchants in Cashless Debit Card program areas to ensure the program does not adversely affect them.