



**SHIRE OF HALLS CREEK**

PO Box 21  
HALLS CREEK WA 6770  
Tel: (08) 9168 6007  
Fax: (08) 9168 6235  
Email:  
[hcshire@hcshire.wa.gov.au](mailto:hcshire@hcshire.wa.gov.au)

The Chair  
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

5 October 2015

Dear Senator Zed Seselja

**SOCIAL SECURITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DEBIT CARD TRIAL) BILL 2015.**

Please find attached the submission to the above Bill from the Shire of Halls Creek. The Shire very much appreciates the opportunity to lodge a late submission with your committee on this very important piece of legislation.

The Shire fully supports the intention of the legislation – to support people, families and communities in places where a lot of people are on welfare, and alcohol, gambling and drug use are causing harm. However having considered the matter thoroughly in the time we have had available we do not consider that the proposed legislation for the introduction of trials of a CDC will achieve that intention. The Shire is not in favour of the proposed CDC trials and therefore also opposes a trial of the CDC in the Shire of Halls Creek.

We look forward to the outcome of the inquiry.

Kind Regards

Malcolm Edwards  
Shire President



5 October 2015

## SHIRE OF HALLS CREEK

SUBMISSION TO: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee  
Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015

### INTRODUCTION:

The Shire wishes to thank the Committee for the opportunity of making a late submission on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015. Unfortunately we were not made aware of the Inquiry and were therefore unable to make the submission by the closing date. The Shire is making this submission as the local authority for the area. As the elected members of this community we wish to outline our concerns with the proposed legislation and the trials of the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) in communities including the Shire (proposed as part of the 'East Kimberley' trial location).

The Shire is not in favour of the Bill and the proposed CDC trials and therefore we also oppose a trial of the CDC in the Shire of Halls Creek. In coming to this conclusion the Council has taken into account the details as they are known of the proposed CDC system, views of local people as they were expressed to councillors, the advice of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee (a formal committee of Council) and the outcomes of the Final Evaluation Report of New Income Management in the Northern Territory<sup>1</sup>. The resolution of the Special Council meeting held on 2 October 2015 is attached as Appendix 1.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Shire of Halls Creek opposes the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015 and the trials of the Cashless Debit Card in communities in Australia, including the Shire of Halls Creek.

Our conclusion was reached after careful consideration of the following:

- A trial has in fact already been undertaken in the Northern Territory and failed. The Final Evaluation of New Income Management in the Northern Territory concluded that there was no evidence that it had improved the outcomes it was intending to have an impact on and that it had actually increased welfare dependency.
- Application to all income support recipients in trial areas would act as a disincentive to the majority who are already acting in a responsible way. Furthermore it would not target or assist the minority who actually need assistance.
- The elderly who would still have access to cash will be more vulnerable to financial pressure and abuse.
- There would be an increase in crime as cash becomes more scarce in communities.



- Support Services are already ineffective and stretched, identifying and providing additional and improved services to deal with the expected increase in need for these services would be difficult and in reality unlikely to materialise.
- Implementation of the CDC system would require substantial personnel resource and finance as well as sensitivity both culturally and in relation to privacy. Again this is unlikely to take place.
- Monitoring and evaluation would be difficult within resource and time constraints. The statistics usually used are broad and evaluations, such as the one in the Northern Territory, are only useful if they are referenced in the formulation of policy and legislation.
- The administration and oversight of the trials has not been detailed in the legislation and leaves the privacy of communities and individuals vulnerable.
- Consultation with potential trial areas has been inconsistent and the results open to interpretation.

#### ISSUES:

##### Northern Territory Final Evaluation Report<sup>1</sup> outcomes:

The 'trial' of the CDC has in effect already been undertaken in the Northern Territory as the New Income Management system and failed to produce any positive results. Whilst acknowledging the differences in administration and delivery the Shire considers that the outcomes for the CDC trials would be similar – the two systems are cash restrictive, universally applied to all income support recipients identified and compulsory for those identified.

The report concludes that the New Income Management income support system in the Northern Territory (NT) has not improved the outcomes that it was intending to have an impact upon and it has encouraged dependence on the welfare system. Furthermore it concluded that there were no effects at a community level, that the system did not facilitate long term behavioural change and that the general measures of well-being at the community level showed no evidence of improvement. The Evaluation is comprehensive and detailed, it was carried out over a significant period of time by professional social researchers and its conclusions were clear. As such it should be considered as one of the key references for the consideration of the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015.

##### Application to all income support recipients:

The CDC trial would apply to all income support recipients except the elderly. Those who are currently managing their income support payments responsibly, who are considered to be the majority, will be unfairly restricted in their spending choices and a fair degree of their ability to



manage their own finances will be removed. Individual accountability and responsibility is diminished when choice is removed. These people currently use their income support to pay their rent and utilities, provide food and clothing for their families and use the remainder responsibly. Part of using income support responsibly is accessing the informal less expensive economy of garage sales, opp shops and similar cash dependent operations. Limited cash will decrease the opportunities to use these options. In all responsible income support recipients could easily become even more dependent on income support as reported in the NT evaluation.

Those who are not being responsible and currently using income support payments to gamble and to fuel alcohol and drug induced harm will not be impacted in any additional way to those who are responsible - there will be no particular incentive to change their habits but rather to find ways around the new system to continue to act as they always have. In addition rent deductions and bill payments for utilities and other regular bills will still be voluntary. Such voluntary programs are unlikely to be entered into by those who currently act irresponsibly. There does not appear to be anyway these people can be treated any differently to other income support recipients which we consider to be a key flaw in any attempt to reduce harm in communities.

The Evaluation report on the NT reflected this in that there was no real change in behaviours or in more general well-being at a community level.

#### Elderly vulnerability:

The elderly living on the Age Pension will not be part of the CDC system – all their income support will still be paid into their bank accounts and available as cash. The elderly are already a vulnerable group in the community and some are already prone to financial abuse by relatives known locally as 'humberging'. Under the CDC they will have access to the most cash in communities which will make them even more vulnerable. This is of particular concern as there is little that can be done because these matters are not easily reported by the victims.

It is understood that those on the Age Pension will be able to 'opt-in' to the CDC system. Practically this will seem to be a difficult task for many elderly provided they even understand that they can do this. They will need to get to a CentreLink office and fill in the required forms with the usual requirements for identification. Furthermore they will need to be able to operate two debit cards (their own and the CDC) and keep track of their spending on each. It seems unlikely that without considerable support the elderly will see this process through or learn how to manage the two cards. The result will be they will remain more vulnerable and open to abuse.

#### Increase in crime:

It is considered that a lack of access to cash will increase crime levels as those seeking cash for alcohol, drugs and gambling look for ways to find that cash. The Forrest Review<sup>2</sup> (p. 107) acknowledged this and recommended a heightened police presence be made available in



vulnerable communities. To our knowledge, in discussions with Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPM&C), Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Parliamentary Secretary, this has not been a consideration in the current development of trial areas for the CDC. It would seem to be an unacceptable risk to already vulnerable communities with police forces currently stretched and under resourced.

#### Support Services:

The DPM&C and DSS have indicated that the Federal Government is committed to pre-trial analysis of current support services and provision of additional services in the trial areas. Additional support services for alcohol and drug dry-out and rehabilitation as well as dealing with gambling addictions will be needed if these behaviours are successfully curbed by the CDC. Financial management and counselling services will also be required. The current number of such services in a community like Halls Creek may indicate that more are not required however it is the effectiveness of those services that needs to be assessed. It is not a simple ratio of service provider to individuals. This is a fundamental and on-going issue – one which if it was undertaken and dealt with effectively would prove to be a huge factor in itself in reducing alcohol, drug and gambling harm. It is not an easy task and would require significant lead in time which is not proposed under the CDC trial timeframe.

This part of the CDC introduction is significantly complicated by the fact that the State provides the majority of funding and services for these matters. As yet there is little to indicate the State's involvement in the introduction of the CDC trials. In fact the Western Australian State Government has recently announced its own review of Human Services to remote communities in recognition of the current duplication, ineffectiveness and high cost of service provision to these areas. The possible conflict of a CDC trial and the State review of services may prove detrimental to the actual provision of effective and timely service delivery.

The Shire of Halls Creek has particular experience in the difference between the promises of service provision and the reality. Since liquor restrictions were introduced in 2009 few effective services dealing with alcohol addiction have materialised. The nearest rehabilitation centre is in Wyndham 370km away which currently has limited capacity to serve the whole of the East Kimberley. The dry-out shelter in Halls Creek was closed some time ago and alcohol related counselling services are very limited. Many services in a town like Halls Creek operate on a fly-in/fly-out system coming on a specific day each fortnight or month. The high mobility of the population makes appointments difficult to keep or follow-up without service providers on the ground in the town. This problem is multiplied many times over for the more remote communities such as Balgo and Ringer Soak – not to mention the inaccessibility over the 4 month wet season for these communities.



It is considered that whilst promises can be made with the best intentions the actual practicalities, cost and administration of an appropriate level of service to deal with the outcomes of a CDC system in terms of social services would not be forthcoming.

#### Implementation:

The task of implementing a system such as the CDC is complex and sensitive. It would involve one-on-one meetings with individual income support recipients to explain the CDC, set up new bank accounts, offer services such as rent deduction and bill payments and set up such deductions if desired. In the Shire of Halls Creek 1300 people are currently on affected income support payments. Logistically implementation would be very difficult with communities such as Balgo, Mulan and Billiluna 3 to 5 hours from Halls Creek town down the unsealed Tanami Road. People throughout the Shire are highly mobile and not always at their registered addresses due to family commitments such as funerals. There are issues with language, cultural matters and literacy. In discussions with the DPM&C and DSS it is not clear how they anticipate overcoming these issues and implementing the roll out of the CDC system within the timeframe they have specified (early 2016).

As noted above the elderly are of particular concern in their vulnerability to financial pressure from others. Getting to these people with the message that they can opt-in to the CDC system would also be a time consuming and complicated matter often requiring interpreters. Again it is doubtful this would be undertaken in a timely effective manner.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation:

Evaluation of the outcomes of the 12 month trials has been indicated however there are very few details on what would be evaluated and how it would be communicated. There is a need to choose indicators to be measured, benchmark these indicators, evaluate them over the 12 months and report back. All this needs to be undertaken professionally and in a transparent manner. The outcome also obviously needs to be acknowledged and taken into account when making decisions regarding the continuation or otherwise of a trial.

Again, due to the imposition of liquor restrictions in the town, the Shire of Halls Creek has particular experience in the evaluation of restrictions and interventions. Evaluations into the effects of the liquor restrictions proved to be difficult to undertake in a meaningful way and based on only the broadest categories of statistics. Some of these evaluations have not actually been made public despite repeated requests to the State Government agencies.

It would appear that significant resource and money has been committed to the evaluation of the NT income management system given the comprehensive nature of the report by the University of New South Wales. It would also appear that the outcomes, with such strong criticism of the



system, were not able to be considered in depth given that a roll over of the NT system was already endorsed in the 2014/2015 Federal budget and as a result will continue until 30 June 2017.

#### Administration and Oversight:

To our knowledge the detail of the administration and oversight of the CDC system has not been established in relation to:

- Implementation – would it be CentreLink or a third party contractor?
- Administration – which bank would administer the CDC?. What responsibilities would they have in relation to overseeing the system with respect to privacy of individuals and the handling and misuse of cards.
- Trial site oversight groups – it is understood that each trial site would have some sort of group of local leaders overseeing the roll-out and operation of the CDC trials – referred to by the DPM&C as Working Groups. It is very unclear how these leaders would be chosen and what their role would actually be in relation to the details of each trial site. In our discussions with the DPM&C and DSS it was also very unclear how these groups would operate and what responsibilities they would have. The legislation is also very general in regard to this matter. In the case of the East Kimberley there was no decision made on whether or not two such groups would operate, one in each Shire, or just one. Given the vast geographical area and number of remote communities in both Shires this is an important issue and the lack of clarity on the matter indicates the lack of preparedness on the part of the federal Government.
- Local Leadership Panels – these groups, referred to as community bodies in the Bill, could oversee applications by individuals to increase the cash portion of income support received. Again there is no clear definition of who would be on the panels, how they would be appointed and how they would be administered. The legislation is also unclear on the detail and yet these groups would be dealing with very sensitive individual privacy matters.

The Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015 is very open and wide in terms of these details and yet such details relate to institutions and groups which will have access to an individual's private financial and personal details. Safeguards have not been included in the legislation. The vital detail appears to have been left to the DSS and to the local leaders they themselves have identified. This places income support recipients in a very vulnerable position with little protection or assurance that their details will be kept private at either a community level or a corporate banking level.

#### Consultation:

To date consultation has been at a high level with groups and individuals considered by the DMP&C to have leadership roles in the various communities and in some cases local business



operators. It appears to have been focussed on Aboriginal people and relied on others to make contact with non-Aboriginal income support recipients rather than groups or leadership. Consultation does not appear to have been undertaken with the income support recipients who will be affected by the trials nor has any official information been made available to them. The media and word of mouth has been the only source of information for these people in the communities affected.

In the case of the Shire of Halls Creek the council itself were first alerted to the possibility of a trial in Halls Creek from the media and it was not until 13 August 2015 that the first meeting was arranged by DPM&C and DSS representatives. Although it was clearly indicated at that meeting that the Parliamentary Secretary Alan Tudge MP would visit the town soon after this a visit was not in fact arranged until the Shire President sent a letter (attached as Appendix 2) directly to Mr. Tudge on 1 September 2015. A visit was then arranged for 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015. Considering the timing of the introduction of the legislation to the House of Representatives on 19 August 2015 it is clear that the views of the Shire of Halls Creek were not considered. It is also clear from the media that discussions had been on-going for some months with the communities and councils of both Ceduna and Kununurra. Further to this the Shire of Halls Creek was not at any time advised by the Federal Government representatives of the Senate Committee Inquiry into the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

**The Shire fully supports the intention of the legislation – to support people, families and communities in places where a lot of people are on welfare, and alcohol, gambling and drug use are causing harm. However having considered all the matters above we do not consider that the proposed legislation for the introduction of trials of a CDC will achieve that intention. The Shire is not in favour of the proposed CDC trials and therefore also opposes a trial of the CDC in the Shire of Halls Creek.**

#### **Attachments:**

Appendix 1 – Resolution of Shire of Halls Creek Special Council meeting 2 October 2015

Appendix 2 – Copy of Letter from Shire of Halls Creek to Parliamentary Secretary Hon. Alan Tudge MP 1 September 2015.

#### **References:**

1. Evaluating New Income Management in the Northern Territory: Final Evaluation Report – Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW September 2014
2. Creating Parity, The Forrest Review – Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Commonwealth of Australia 2014



## Appendix 1

Minutes of the meeting of the Council of the Shire of Halls Creek held in the Council Chamber, Thomas Street, Halls Creek on 2 October 2015.

### *That Council:*

1. *note the Federal Governments proposal to trial the Cashless Debit Card in a number of communities in Australia;*
2. *notes that the intention of the trial is to reduce alcohol and drug induced harm and to reduce welfare money being wasted on gambling;*
3. *supports the intentions of the Federal Government;*
4. *advises the Federal Government that it:*
  - a. *supports the intentions of the Government in relation to reducing harm from alcohol and gambling however it does not consider that a trial of the Cashless Debit Card is the way to achieve this.*
5. *agrees that a letter outlining the Shire's views be sent, by the Shire President, to the Hon. Alan Tudge MP, Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for the Cashless Debit Card trial*
6. *notes that the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee is holding an inquiry into the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015 and has agreed that the Shire can lodge a late submission to the Committee on this matter;*
7. *instructs officers to prepare a submission on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015 to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee based on the resolution of this meeting and including reference to the matters raised by the Aboriginal Advisory Committee in their discussion of the matter, the conclusions of the Evaluation Report of New Income Management in the Northern Territory and the letter to be sent to the Parliament Secretary as set above in 5. above; and*
8. *agrees that the President approves and signs the submission on behalf of Council prior to it being sent to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee by Tuesday, 6 October 2015.*

CARRIED 5/1

Resolution no. 2015/097



**SHIRE OF HALLS CREEK**

**PO Box 21  
HALLS CREEK WA 6770  
Tel: (08) 9168 6007  
Fax: (08) 9168 6235  
Email:  
[hcshire@hcshire.wa.gov](mailto:hcshire@hcshire.wa.gov)**

Hon Alan Tudge MP  
Parliamentary Secretary  
P O Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

1 September 2015

Dear Mr Tudge

**PROPOSED HEALTHY WELFARE CARD IN SHIRE OF HALLS CREEK**

It is with considerable concern to have received the attached email from Grant Astles, (Advisor, Dept. Prime Minister and Cabinet in Broome) regarding the Cashless Debit Card. At a meeting held with Alistair Sherwin (Dept. of Prime Minister and Cabinet) and Kai Cantwell (Department of Social Services) here in the Shire offices on 13 August 2015 we were assured that a decision had not been made regarding a trial of the Cashless Debit Card in the Shire of Halls Creek. Nor had the details regarding any possible trial such as the cash component of the card, the involvement of the remote communities in the Shire or whether a local community panel should operate in the Shire been decided. At that meeting we were also assured that a visit to the Shire to discuss the matter with the community and the Shire prior to any decision or announcement was being arranged for you as the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for this matter. It now seems clear that the decision to introduce the Cashless Debit Card trial in Halls Creek has already been made by the Federal Government.

As discussed at that meeting the Shire will be considering the merits of the Cashless Debit Card for Halls Creek at its next meeting on 17th September 2015. A copy of that report and the resulting resolution will be forwarded to you as a matter of courtesy however I feel that our concerns with the process that has been employed to consult with our community, as one of only a few communities in Australia to be affected by this significant change in government policy and social welfare delivery, should be expressed before that meeting.

It is clear from reports in the media (attached for your information) that the Shire of Moree discussed this matter directly with you and had some influence on

the resulting decision to exclude that Shire from the trial. You also met with the Ceduna community twice prior to the decision to commence a trial in that community. The President of the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley was quoted in the media (Perth Now 28th June 2015) as follows "We've had a number of meetings with Alan Trudge, the Parliamentary Secretary liaising with communities on the Healthy Welfare Card".

The Shire is elected by the community to represent the community of Halls Creek and should therefore be engaged in meaningful discussion by decision makers on this important issue - as other Shires have been. On behalf of the Shire of Halls Creek I am therefore registering deep concern regarding the process of consultation and engagement undertaken by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Social Services in relation to this matter. The Shire looks forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Malcolm Edwards  
President  
Shire of Halls Creek

## Agnes Adan

---

**From:** ASTLES, Grant [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 1 September 2015 12:30 PM  
**To:** Rodger Kerr-Newell  
**Cc:** Margaret Glass; SCHELL, Meegan  
**Subject:** Cashless Debit Card [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
  
**Importance:** High

Hi Roger,

I hope this finds you well.

Myself and Meegan Schell have been tasked to progress the engagement on the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) in the Halls Creek and Tjurabalan region.

Alistair my Regional Manager met with you recently and as requested seeking your assistance to arrange a meeting with you and the councillors.

We will be in Halls Creek following a trip to the Tjurabalan on Thursday 10/09/2015.

Are we able to arrange a meeting at 4pm as I understand this suits councillors who may have work commitments to attend.

Feel free to call me with any issues and if this time is/is not suitable.

I am mindful there is a council meeting the following week.

Cheers.

**Grant Astles | Advisor**  
Broome Office | Kimberley Region  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[www.dpmc.gov.au](http://www.dpmc.gov.au) | [www.indigenous.gov.au](http://www.indigenous.gov.au)  
PO Box 613 BROOME WA 6725

*The Department acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.*

9/1/2015

Moree says no to welfare card - ABC New England North West NSW - Australian Broadcasting Corporation

21 July, 2015 1:38PM AEST

## Moree says no to welfare card

By Kelly Fuller

**The Moree community tells the Federal Government it doesn't want to be used as a trial site for its 'welfare card'**

The Moree Mayor, Katrina Humphries says her community does not want the Federal Government to use it as a trial for the 'welfare card'.

Earlier this year the federal government revealed it was considering introducing a welfare card in Moree.

The trial of cashless welfare card is designed to allow recipients to buy essentials, but block the purchase of alcohol, drugs and gambling.

The idea was originally raised in an Indigenous employment review, provided by mining magnate Andrew Forrest to the Government last year.

In June, the Nationals MP for Parkes, Mark Coulton indicated his support for the trial, but on the Morning Show we heard concerns from some parts of the community and sporting groups.

The Department of Social Service has been in Moree talking to community and last night the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Alan Tudge met with the Mayor.

"My biggest fear with all this is our crime statistics which are on a down turn could easily start to spike again and that is the last thing that we want or need in our community." Mayor Humphries says.

"I started to get very frustrated with it, I had a NIMBY moment, not in my back yard, why single us out again, do we really need another divisive thing in our community? I don't think so, we are trying to move forward. I have no issue with the card, but don't single us out as a community to use it, and what if it doesn't work out? It could set us back ten years, I am not prepared for that." she added.

She says she'd be very surprised if Moree ended up being one of the towns selected for the trial.

The Nationals MP for Parkes, Mark Coulton says he's surprised by the Mayor's reaction and still believes it is worth a considering, but says it won't go ahead if the community doesn't want the card.

"I actually thought the way Moree is being proactive they would have embraced this, but it seems from our consultation, there was mixed reaction, we would need community support for this to go ahead." he says

Mr Coulton says the final decision hasn't been made, but he believes it is unlikely to go ahead.

"We've said right from the start, if the community are not behind it, it's more than likely not going to happen, there might be some further discussions, but realistically if the community is not for this, well it is not something that is going to be imposed." he says.



Moree says no to welfare card ( ABC TV News file)

More from ABC New England North West NSW

## THE AUSTRALIAN

### Trial communities back no-grog, cashless welfare cards

THE AUSTRALIAN JUNE 13, 2015 12:00AM SARAH MARTIN



Alan Tudge, the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister who is leading consultations with indigenous community leaders. Picture: Lawrence Pinder

**Communities riven with social dysfunction and substance abuse have welcomed government moves to introduce a cashless welfare card to stop payments being spent on alcohol and gambling.**

The government has identified at least three communities as potential trial sites for the so-called Healthy Welfare card, first advocated by mining magnate Andrew Forrest in his review of the welfare system last year.

The government is consulting with community leaders in Kununurra in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia, Moree in northern NSW and Ceduna on South Australia's west coast, with the aim of rolling out the card within the next six months, but the government says no final decisions have been made.

Each of the communities has a large indigenous population and entrenched social dysfunction as a result of alcohol-fuelled violence and crime.

Ceduna Mayor Allan Suter said there was broad community support for the card, which operates as a bank debit card but prevents alcohol and gambling purchases.

Alan Tudge, the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister who is leading consultations, has visited twice to talk to - indigenous and non-indigenous groups.

"The consultation has been very comprehensive, and I think that is probably one of the reasons why the community may be receptive to a trial," Mr Suter said.

"We see it as potentially a very positive initiative. However, we will be mindful to the attitude of our local community because there is no good trying to bring something in against the wishes of the community."

9/1/2015

Towns back no-grog welfare cards

Mr Butler's comments were supported by head of the Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation Mick Haynes, who gave in-principle support to welfare reform. "There are certainly some positives with the card, but we want to ensure that it ticks all the boxes," he said.

Ian Trust, from the Wunan Aboriginal development organisation in Kununurra, said communities in the East Kimberley were eager for changes aimed at ending welfare dependency and addressing substance abuse.

He said the reform could apply in Wyndham and Halls Creek, along with Kununurra.

He said this could be achieved through a combination of the new card along with some measures taken from the Families Responsibilities Commission from Cape York. This could be used to determine how much welfare was quarantined, based on measures such as school attendance.

"There are a lot of people currently in a social crisis, and to get them to some level of stability we need to have some sort of reform agenda," he said.

Once this was achieved, incentives for work and school attendance could be introduced. But Mr Trust warned that the card would need to be accompanied with additional services, such as detox programs and more indigenous police or "social order rangers" to help with the transition.

"If we roll this out on a mass scale there will be a big demand for people wanting and needing to be detoxed," he said.

Kununurra shire president John Moulden said the council wanted the card introduced as soon as possible. "The whole community stands to benefit," he said.

But Moree's representative on the region's Aboriginal Land Council, Tom French, said he had concerns. "It is another way for the government to keep us down," he said. "It will only escalate the problem — people are going to be short of money and they are going to do whatever it takes."

Mr Tudge would not comment on the consultations, saying only that: "We have been speaking with several communities across the country and no decision has been made."

2 COMMENTS



3 people listening

+ Follow

Share

Post comment

NEWEST | OLDEST | TOP COMMENTS



**MrSceptic**

JUN 13, 2015

Apart from two references to the adjective "aboriginal" that occurs in the names of the land councils above the journalist above never says aboriginals. Even the President of the USA refers to 'people of colour' in his public statements. It is this self censorship adopted by the media that is a part of the broader political correctness that has crept into public debate in Australia.

2 LIKE REPLY



**Terence**

**@MrSceptic**

JUN 14, 2015

That is not the sort of "recognition" that is currently in vogue.

LIKE REPLY