

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2016-2017 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 2.1 Families and Communities

Question No: SQ17-000065

Topic: Cashless Debit Card

Hansard page: Written

Senator Rachel Siewert asked:

Since the card was introduced, domestic violence has increased in the East Kimberley. What specifically is the government doing about addressing this?

a. How do you justify continuing the trial when this is the case?

Answer:

The Cashless Debit Card is designed to reduce social harm at the community level by reducing the amount of cash available to be spent on harmful goods such as alcohol, drugs and gambling. Limiting the availability of cash limits accessibility to these harmful goods, which in turn, may reduce the incidence and severity of social harms such as domestic violence.

There are many contributing factors that can impact on domestic violence reporting rates. It is important to note that on 1 May 2016, the Kimberley Police initiated a more thorough first response to Domestic Violence which now aligns with the Western Australia Family and Domestic Violence policy towards reporting domestic violence. This has seen a broader range of incidents recorded than were recorded previously.

At a national level the Commonwealth Government is implementing the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan).

The National Plan brings together efforts of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the community to make a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children. The National Plan is a 12 year strategy being delivered through four three-year action Plans.

The *Third Action Plan 2016-2019* of the National Plan was launched in October 2016 and sets out 36 practical actions to be undertaken across six priority areas: prevention and early intervention to address attitudes; sharpening the focus on sexual violence; improving responses and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children; responding to children living with violence; providing greater support and choice for women; and holding perpetrators accountable across all systems.

- Specifically in the East Kimberley, the Commonwealth funds support services which directly address domestic violence or support its victims including:
- *Save the Children* is working with other service providers to raise awareness of available supports for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

- *Kimberley Community Legal Services* has established a specialist domestic violence unit in the Kimberley, which provides legal and other support to women experiencing domestic or family violence. The unit manages each client's case to ensure they can access necessary services, such as counselling and crisis accommodation.
- *Yura Yungi Aboriginal Medical Service* provides clients with culture-based counselling and support, emphasising reconnection with families and including counselling for abuse, domestic violence, trauma, dysfunction and cultural dislocation.
- *Western Australia Family Violence Prevention Legal Service Aboriginal Corp* provides culturally appropriate legal services and assistance to Indigenous victims/survivors of family violence or sexual assault. Services include legal advice, counselling for victims of sexual assault, child protection and support, referral services, early intervention and prevention activities and community legal education.

The Cashless Debit Card Trial Wave 1 Interim Evaluation Report concluded that “overall, the [trial] has been effective to date... in particular, the trial has been effective in reducing alcohol consumption, illegal drug use and gambling – establishing a clear ‘proof-of-concept’.” Alcohol and drugs are recognised as contributing factors to domestic and family violence. By limiting access to these harmful goods, the Cashless Debit Card can work alongside the National Plan and support services to reduce the incidence and severity of social harms such as domestic violence.