

12. ATTACHMENT B TO SUBMISSION

The following statement is submitted to the Committee on behalf of members of the community on Milingimbi/Yurrwi Island who requested NAAJA's assistance with sending their statement to the Committee. It is requested that it is accepted by the Committee as a submission separately to NAAJA's submission.

Submission to the Inquiry regarding the introduction of the Cashless Debit Card to the NT by members of the Community on Milingimbi/ Yurrwi Island

“Telling our stories to balance the scales of justice”

We are First Nations People of Australia and the people of this land, our country Milingimbi/ Yurrwi Island.

We want to formally express our concerns about the decision of the Government to introduce the Cashless Debit Card Bill into Parliament. We are against the Government bringing the cashless debit card to the NT and to our community. We are against continuing with welfare quarantining.

We want to tell you from our heart about our concerns about this decision, which was made by members of the Australian Government and the Parliament in Canberra, a long way away from Milingimbi. We are telling our stories and are hoping that the government will listen and balance the scales of justice

We were not told about these plans: the Government did not come to talk to us in Milingimbi. They did not sit down with us and talk about it. The decision was unexpected, and the decision is happening very quickly. When we heard about it we started talking about it, in our community and in the Yolgnu communities in Arnhem Land.

The BasicsCard and the Cashless Debit Card take away freedom from the people who are told that they have to use it. It enslaves people's choices and stops them making decisions about their own lives. This payment quarantining has been going on for a long time. Some people have been quarantined their whole lives. When the Government takes choices away from people, they lose their self-esteem. We respect the Government, but this decision takes too much freedom away.

One of our big concerns about this law is that it takes responsibility away from people and this stops them from learning how to manage their own affairs. We want people to be accountable for their own lives, to learn how to manage their own lives. We want people to learn how to budget and how to use money. The cashless debit card doesn't do this: it does the opposite. It takes away the ability of people to make choices about their own life, making the choice for them, so they do not learn how manage their own affairs.

We are worried about the cashless debit card. People want a bank card that you can use like normal: a card that they can use for shopping and to get cash out. The only bank that we have on Milingimbi is the Traditional Credit Union (TCU), but when money is quarantined you don't get very much money in your TCU account. We are worrying, what will happen to that bank?

Quarantining reminds us of the days of rations: when Balanda (European Australians) had money but Aboriginal people were only given rations: flour, sugar and tea. This was unjust and unequal. These days should be far gone: we are living in a new world. But again we are

seeing Yolgnu people's choice being taken away. We need to balance the scales of justice so that we are all equal: so that we are all treated in a right and fair way.

We had a meeting in our community about the cashless debit card and talked about our worries. We asked ourselves, do you want your money to be quarantined on the new debit card? And the people said: no, we don't want it. So we had a protest in our community. There was a big mob of Yolgnu people protesting.



We respect the Parliament but we think it should be a voice for all people regardless of colour. The Parliament has a responsibility under the Constitution to speak for all of the Australian people. We are saying that this decision to keep on taking away freedoms from Yolgnu people is going too far.

Cashless debit card and Basics Cards are not a Yolgnu system, this is a Balanda system that is imposed on us. We are Yolgnu people who want to live in modern society and be a part of it. We want to walk the same way as other people and be treated with equal rights.

This is the story from our hearts. We want the Government to listen to us. We are frustrated with these types of changes: when people in the city make decisions that paralyse our community and take away our freedoms. This is like another invasion into our communities, like a tsunami bursting into our small communities. Enough is enough.

We are Yolgnu people from Arnhem Land communities who want to engage with the Government, to tell stories about our communities and how we can make them stronger. We want to work for a brighter future for our children, to have reasons for tomorrow. We are part of the solution. The Government is turning its backs on people with ideas about our community, who have knowledge about their community and know what we need to do to build

a strong bridge to the future. When the Government doesn't engage and work together with the people, then they come up with policies that don't work and that are not fair.

To have a better future for our children and to prosper we need to build a bridge of commonality: a shared vision of hope. We need Balanda to take our hands and walk with us, to treat us equally, with respect. The Government needs to be accountable for building this bridge.

We do not think that this decision is a fair go. We do not think that the Government is looking into its heart and making the right decision for the betterment of all Australians.