



## **QoN No. 3**

### **Background**

The Shire of Menzies has a population of 490 of whom 184 reside at Tjuntjuntjara. The ABS data shows that Menzies has 4 persons unemployed.

There are, 13 participants in the Community Development (CD) Program in Menzies which suggests that most participants are underemployed rather than unemployed. The number of residents affected by the introduction of the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) will include all those on income support.

This means that the restrictions on cash will have a lesser effect on the community as a whole than were all 13 classified as unemployed. There is little employment available in the town, and part time employment is taken where possible.

All participants in the CD Program in Menzies are indigenous. Concern has been expressed by them that the CD Programs do not appear to be available to those on disability support.

There may be residents in the Community on disability support who, because they are not active in programs, are invisible.

### **Consultation**

Menzies consultation with the Community was conducted during the first week of August 2017. Representatives of the Department of Social Services visited the town. They did not meet with Council, but went to the Menzies Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) premises.

The visit coincided with Local Government Week, so the Chief Executive Officer and the President were in Perth during the visit. Councillor Ian Tucker who is both a member of the Council of the Shire of Menzies and a Director of the Menzies Aboriginal Corporation was present. This is the reason that Councillor Tucker was also the spokesperson for the Council at the hearing on 12 October 2017.

No notes were taken of the meeting, however discussions with Vashti Ashwin, an employee of the MAC indicates that the delegation met with those members of the community who are active participants of the CD Program. There 13 CD Program participants in Menzies. About 10 of them were present on the day. (As previously stated most CD Program participants have some form of employment).

The group reported that they were extremely comfortable with the presentation which was given using easy to understand terminology. They were able to see what the card looked like, and there was no rush to finish. The floor was open to anyone who wished to speak, and opportunity was available for one-to-one conversation away from the group.

While concerns were raised, at the meeting, the consensus was as presented by Councillor Tucker.

The Menzies Community rarely make decisions that do not reflect the best for the Community. When individual and Community rights clash, traditionally it is the interest of the Community that win out.



## **Other Information and Discussion**

The President of the Council and members of the Goldfields Voluntary Region of Councils (GVROC) received a briefing from Mr Dougall Ethell from Munderoo in April 2017. This followed a discussion at the GVROC meeting held in Esperance in early February 2017 regarding the increasing anti-social behaviour and community disfunction being experienced across the region.

The proposed trialling of the card has been discussed in many forums. It is the consultation with those potentially affected that is the subject of this response.

In August 2017, following informal Council discussions, a Council resolution was passed.

### **COUNCIL RESOLUTION No. 1261**

**Moved: Cr Lee Seconded: Cr Mazza**

***That Council***

- 1. Subject to the distribution of the “Cashless Card” to all benefit recipients, the Council agrees to its introduction in the Towns of Kookynie and Menzies.***
- 2. Tjuntjuntjara not be included in the trial of this program until the Community has had sufficient time to consider all ramifications of its introduction and resolve administration queries relating to the cards.***
- 3. That “in person support systems” be provided for all those accessing the MyGov portal***

**Carried:6/0**

This is the basis for support by the Shire of Menzies as is appropriate. The Councillors are the elected representatives of the community for Local Government. The support as shown is qualified and is limited to the residents of Menzies and Kookynie who are directly linked socially and geographically to the townsites of Leonora, Laverton and Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

The residents of Tjuntjuntjara do not have this linkage, and therefore were excluded from this resolution. Consultation in remote communities requires a different approach to that in an established town site.

In-person support for Menzies is yet to be provided.



#### **QoN No. 4**

The question regarding why, a town that prides itself on not having the social problems of its neighbours would commit to the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) must be viewed with an awareness of the geographical location of the towns of Menzies and Kookynie, their small population, and lack of services. There are no Police, Doctor or grocery retail services.

Menzies indigenous population accounts for 44% of the 108 residents. One of the eighteen students at the school is non-indigenous. Eleven members of the community have educational attainment above Certificate Level III, and 80% of the population speak only English at home.

Menzies society is composed of a stable family based community.

We have no public housing. There are about fourteen privately owned houses, most of which are owner-occupied, twelve houses owned by the Shire of Menzies (which houses some Council Staff, Teachers, and the Nurse), and ten owned by Menzies Aboriginal Corporation. Only those who are successful with an application for tenancy of one of the houses managed by the Menzies Aboriginal Corporation or private landlords can rent property in the town. This control has resulted in a stable, safe community free from many of the pressures associated with the rest of the Goldfields. There are rarely vacant residential properties.

Members of the Community when asked why we lack the problems associated with our neighbours, responded with the following.

- Regular activities for the Children
- Community sport sponsored by the Shire (sport is played most weeks, mixed netball where each team is made up of male and females aged between 9 and 50. Badminton on a Thursday evening regularly attracts up to 50 players. Tuesday afternoons is for Primary school aged badminton players.
- School holiday bush camps sponsored by the Shire and Menzies Aboriginal Corporation. The shire pays for transport and organisation, and the community join to hunt and gather bush tucker.
- A tradition of respect for each other, and an understanding of the importance of rules.
- Strong Community Leaders who have earned and retain respect.

Finally – why the decision to agree to subjecting the four unemployed to the CDC?

Most residents in Menzies have close family ties within the Goldfields. It is inconceivable that if asked you would not share what you have. When communities north of Menzies have funerals or 'business' the locals may be pressured to support by way of food and/or drink. Remembering that Menzies does not have a supermarket, only a hotel, the pressure will be to provide drink.

The two local publicans support the community, and when restrictions or hotel closures occur in Laverton and Leonora, the hotels in Kookynie and Menzies also close their doors. Initially to take away sales, and where necessary to over the counter sales. We don't have an accord. This is risk management in a small community.



The decision to endorse the Cashless Card is one of recognition by this community of the steps being taken by our neighbours, for what is believed by Local Governments to be the best for the whole community of the Northern Goldfields. Much has been said about the social problems being experienced by towns neighbouring Menzies. While this community is safe, our children attend school, and we have no permanent police presence, we are not xenophobic.

Beyond the boundaries of our community we know that help is needed. The Cashless Card, if adopted by our neighbours, must be embraced by us. Not to do so would put pressure on those in this community vulnerable to pressure to share unrestricted benefits. We must accept the measures used ensure that those around us have a better future. If it is decided that one of the measures needed to achieve this is the Cashless Card, we will support it.