



27 February 2019

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email to: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) is writing to express its concerns regarding the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019 which will extend the cashless debit trials in three locations as well as the income management program in Cape York. As the stated purpose of these trials and programs is to stop individuals accessing alcohol and gambling products, we are concerned at the continued pursuit of this policy against the advice of addiction specialists.

The RANZCP is the principal organisation representing the medical speciality of psychiatry in Australia and New Zealand and is responsible for training, educating and representing psychiatrists on policy issues. The RANZCP is guided on policy matters by a range of expert committees, including the Faculty of Addiction Psychiatry and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Committee.

As psychiatrists, we are accustomed to treating people with complex needs relating to addiction, mental health and employment difficulties. Alcohol use disorder and problem gambling are classified mental health disorders and are a core concern for psychiatrists considering the complex interrelationship between addictive behaviours, mental disorders and physical health comorbidities.

The RANZCP has consistently advocated against the trials on three principal grounds:

1. They are not properly designed to support people with concurrent addiction and employment issues. More than 50 years of psychological research shows that positive reinforcement strategies are more effective than punitive strategies in bringing about behavioural change.
2. They risk doing further damage by contributing to entrenched feelings of disempowerment, hopelessness and injustice, while encouraging financial elder abuse. Furthermore, their disproportionate application to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is exacerbating community grievances and presenting risks for retraumatisation on a communal scale.
3. They have not been developed through comprehensive consultation and collaboration with affected communities. In particular, although the importance of self-determination to



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Indigenous peoples is well-recognised, both in medical and social sciences, and international human rights law, the trials are not being designed and delivered in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Rather than extending the trials and program, the RANZCP urges the Government to scale up its investment in evidence-based and culturally appropriate public rehabilitation and addiction services to ensuring that people with addiction issues are able to access the help they need, when they need it.

For more information on our concerns, please refer to the [RANZCP submission on the Social Services Legislation Amendment \(Cashless Debit Card Trial Expansion\) Bill 2018](#).

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in the submission, please contact Rosie Forster, Executive Manager, Practice, Policy and Partnerships

Yours faithfully

Dr Kym Jenkins
President

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