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Dear Members of the Senate Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a Submission.

I would first like to tell you a little about 1 Territory to help place the rest of the Submission in context.

## **1. Background**

1.1 1 Territory is a political party registered in the Northern Territory (NT) . It achieved registration with the Northern Territory Electoral Commission in November 2015. Since then 1 Territory has grown to now have hundreds of members spread throughout the NT, of whom 35% identify as First Nations. The membership reflects the demographic profile of the NT in terms of age and employment status.

1.2 One of the founding principles of 1 Territory is that governments at all levels must respect individual freedoms and people's rights to govern themselves to achieve what Territorians desire.

1.3 1 Territory is one of the few (if any ) political parties that has the word "listen" in the Constitution and this is the reason we are making this Submission. Members who will be subjected to this have told us most forcefully that they do **NOT** want or need this control by government in their lives.

## **2. Our view on the Cashless Debit Card (CDC)**

2.1 The CDC quarantines an 80% loading of all Centrelink payments onto the card with the other 20% left in the bank account to access for other items of expenditure where cash may be needed (for example the local Art and Craft Market and other non- eftpos transactions). The impact on local businesses of these restrictions do not appear to have modelled or costed and this could be significant in an economy like the NT.

2.2 One issue that has not been addressed is the cash payment required for shared housing, which is sometimes the only option of having a roof over your head as a low income earner. One member has told us that if this is forced onto her, she will have to leave the NT or live on the streets because she will be homeless. The remaining 20% will not cover her shared housing costs.

2.3 With such a low loading of 20%, we feel sure that this is just to appease people and that 20% will be removed once the majority have transferred over to it. Whilst this is an easy way of governance by control, as it may eliminate some problems but comes at the expense of a free society.

2.4 The Senate Enquiry noted that 1 in 12 people had enquired about getting out of the scheme. There could be more who do not feel able to voice their concerns.

2.5 Another concern is that once people who have transferred to the Cashless Debit Card, it is very difficult to then prove they are able to manage their lives and income well, before they are able to be removed from having to operate with

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this card. The applications for the removal off the card now have to go through the Department of Social Services Secretary and it is quite an arduous ordeal and certainly not a humane way to treat our older and elderly citizens; it is completely lacking in dignity.

2.6 Another concern is that the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights has found a recurring pattern that the Cashless Debit Card policy is discriminatory against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has criticised the CDC as conflicting with Australia's human rights duty to its people.

2.7 The report from an Auditor General has revealed that irrelevant data was collected and used from ORIMA research who were granted the contract to research the CDC trial in 2017. Because of high costs, not all of the data was used to get the end result of the trial, leading the Auditor General to say "As a consequence, it is difficult to conclude whether there had been a reduction in social harm and whether the card was a lower-cost welfare quarantining approach".

2.8 The initial trial cost \$10,000 per person. Approximately 1,850 people were covered by the trial and the preliminary report showed that 1 out of every 2 said their life was of poorer quality and of a lower standard on the card. The cost of the cashless card trial to the Federal Government was \$18.9 million excluding GST.

2.9 The company providing the Debit Card Indue, received payment of \$7.9m, while the government spent \$2.6m on its own administrative costs and \$2.6m on drug and alcohol related supportive services. The way this tender has been awarded to Indue should be examined as well as there does appear to be potential conflicts of interest with some major political parties.

2.10 As it will cost thousands of dollars per person to administer and does not and will not address the problems of alcohol, drugs and gaming in the community, 1 Territory does not support the introduction of the CDC in the NT. The funds to run this card should be expended at the front line of service provision.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours sincerely

Braedon Earley  
President