

The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for Social Services
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

5 July 2022

Bringing the Cashless Debit Card to an End

Dear Minister Rishworth,

I write to you on behalf of the Accountable Income Management Network to request your timely action on the issue of the Cashless Debit Card (CDC). Our network has appreciated Labor's commitment to bringing the scheme to an end, and we are aware that this will involve some complexity. However, we understand that compulsory participants continue to be brought onto the CDC, and that current participants have still been subject to onerous assessment mechanisms put in place by the previous government when applying for exits and wellbeing exemptions. In view of these concerns, we make the following recommendations for immediate actions that can be taken in prior to the legislated end of the CDC on 31 December 2022.

1. **Cease the involuntary onboarding of any new CDC participants across current trial sites.** This will provide reassurance to persons across trial sites who are eligible but not yet subject to the scheme that they will not be forced to participate. The Morrison Government demonstrated in early 2020 that such action is possible in the absence of legislation and is able to be implemented rapidly. We understand that the situation in Cape York will require a different approach to other CDC areas but encourage immediate consultation with participants in the region to inform next steps.
2. **Cease promotion of the transfer of Income Management participants onto the CDC in the Northern Territory and stop any in-progress transfers.** Services Australia should communicate with communities and individual participants in the Northern Territory that all transfers have ceased in view of the scheme's imminent end and clarify the steps to be taken in dismantling compulsory CDC participation.
3. **Reduce impediments in the CDC exit process.** Pending the legislated end of the CDC, the Department of Social Services and Services Australia should work together to streamline processes for exit and wellbeing exemptions, including for in-progress applications. Current compulsory participants who wish to stay on the CDC in a voluntary capacity should still be provided with exit information and the opportunity to make an individual and informed choice about participation.
4. **Ensure that the Centrepay arrangements of existing clients are transitioned to their unrestricted bank account at the point of exit.** Participants exiting the scheme should be supported with assistance at the point of exit to maintain rent and bill payment arrangements via Centrepay.
5. **Issue a clear public statement about the Government's commitment to, and arrangements for, ending the CDC under Part 3D of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*.** We recommend that this be accompanied by a public statement about ending broad-based compulsory income management under Part 3B of the same Act.

We thank you for your commitment to ending compulsory income management under the Cashless Debit Card and look forward to your action on these issues to prevent further harm under this scheme.

Kind Regards,

Priya Kunjan
Secretariat
Accountable Income Management Network