

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

PO Box 4093
Ainslie ACT 2602
T (02) 6230 1775
F (02) 6230 1704
anglicare@anglicare.asn.au
www.anglicare.asn.au

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Dear Senators,

Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Continuation of Cashless Welfare) Bill 2020

Australia is in the grip of a terrible recession, and job losses are ongoing. Some of the biggest challenges facing us are to stop thousands of people falling into poverty, create enough jobs, and support people back into work. Experts agree it will take years for our communities to recover from this recession. These tasks should be the focus of the Government and the parliament.

It is nonsensical that the Government has decided that now is the time to make the Cashless Welfare Card permanent in the areas it claims it has been trialling it, and impose it as further discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the Northern Territory and Cape York.

No new evidence has been presented from the extended trials. We therefore direct you to our previous submissions detailing the failure of compulsory income management schemes, and the damage they causeⁱ.

In our Network's experience, Australians receiving government income payments are, on the whole, resilient and prudent with their money. They have been forced for many years to survive on an income well below the poverty line, and it is the stark lack of funds that drives too many into financial crisis.

For those forced onto the Cashless Debit Card, compulsory income management has done nothing to improve their situation. What did help was raising the rate of Jobseeker and related payments above the poverty line so that people for the first time in over 20 years had enough money to cover the basic cost of living.

The Senate should reject this Bill in its entirety. It should do so to end the harms being caused in the regions where the Cashless Welfare Card has been imposed. Rejecting the Bill would also send a clear signal to the many thousands of unemployed Australians that the parliament will work to protect their dignity and rights, and focus on keeping them out of poverty, as we work together to recover from this recession.

Yours Sincerely



Kasy Chambers
Executive Director
Anglicare Australia

ⁱ See Anglicare Australia (2018) [Submission on the Cashless Debit Card Expansion](#); and (2019) [Submission on the Income Management to Cashless Debit Card Transition Bill](#).