

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

18 October 2019

Dear Committee,

We are writing to provide comment into the Committee's inquiry into the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management to Cashless Debit Card Transition) Bill 2019.

We refer to the submission made to this inquiry by Jesuit Social Services, and express our agreement with their analysis and concerns about the Cashless Debit Card trial including:

- The disproportionate impact of the Cashless Debit Card trial on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- The lack of adequate or genuine consultation with communities on this issue.
- The lack of evidence that the Cashless Debit Card trial is effective in reducing violence and harm in communities, and moreover, the evidence that it has had negative impacts on people including cases where the trial has caused or exacerbated financial hardship.
- The top-down, punitive approach of the Cashless Debit Card trial and its imposition on a mandatory and blanket-basis.

We echo Jesuit Social Service's concerns that the Cashless Debit Card trial undermines communities' right to self-determination. We urge the committee to use the principles of self-determination and subsidiarity as the basis for this inquiry and their recommendations.

The principle of subsidiarity, and its importance in Indigenous Affairs, is neatly summarised by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council as follows:

"Subsidiarity compels us to realise that the people closest to, and most affected by, the issues are the ones best placed to address them, with the help of the Government... From the experience of the Council, programs that genuinely embrace the principles of subsidiarity when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the most effective".<sup>1</sup>

We also point to the 'Joint Statement on Subsidiarity'<sup>2</sup>, issued by twelve organisations

---

<sup>1</sup> Quote from Mr John Lochowiak, Chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council as quoted in the *Joint Statement on Subsidiarity*, available at [www.caritas.org.au/docs/default-source/publications-and-reports/joint-statement-on-subsidiarity-booklet.pdf](http://www.caritas.org.au/docs/default-source/publications-and-reports/joint-statement-on-subsidiarity-booklet.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Joint Statement on Subsidiarity*, *ibid.*

including Jesuit Social Services, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, Red Dust Healing and Caritas Australia, and echo its call for governments and organisations who work for the wellbeing of First Australians to commit to the principle of subsidiarity.

We do not support the expansion of the Cashless Debit Card trial.

Sincerely,

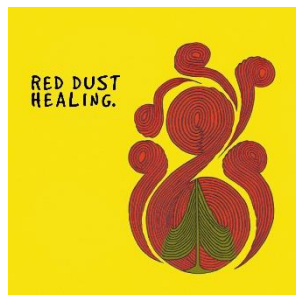
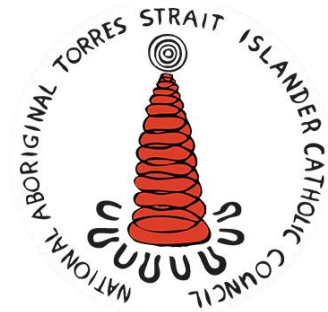
Aunty Margaret Farrell  
Chairperson, Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation

Uncle Lester Maher, Chairperson  
Dr Tiffany McComsey, CEO  
Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation

Mr John Lochowiak  
Chairperson, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

Uncle Tom Powell  
Founder, Red Dust Healing

Bishop Christopher Saunders  
Chair, Caritas Australia



## **About the signatory organisations**

### **Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation**

We, the Directors of the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, are four Aboriginal elders who live in Western Sydney and know all about the ups and downs of life for Aboriginal People in the Mount Druitt area.

Our main purpose is to support our people in healing from the past and building towards the future. We work as a group to support individuals, we turn no one away, and we seek to build our people's pride in who they are, their sense of belonging, and their sense of connectedness to community and culture.

### **Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation**

Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) is a not-for-profit Aboriginal community controlled organisation established by survivors of Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home (KBH), a 'home' run by the NSW Government for over 50 years (1924 – 1970) to house Aboriginal boys forcibly removed from their families.

Led by the KBH survivors and their families, KBHAC encourages and supports sustainable healing programs that address the legacy of physical, sexual, psychological and cultural abuse experienced by the KBH survivors as well as the intergenerational trauma experienced by their descendants.

Our vision is to improve the social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of the KBH survivors and their families in meaningful ways.

We are committed to empowering positive, healthy peer support models that address the reconstruction of identity and restoration of family structures.

### **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council**

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) is the peak advisory body to the Australian Catholic Bishops on issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics.

The council was first formed in 1989 at the first National Conference of the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Councils. In 1992 the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference officially recognised the Council as the national representative and consultative body to the Church on issues concerning Indigenous Catholics.

NATSICC is a not-for-profit organisation that is funded by the Catholic Church and Caritas Australia's First Nations program.

## **Red Dust Healing**

Red Dust Healing is a specific cultural healing program, written from an Indigenous perspective, and targeted at Indigenous Men, women and families, as well as other Australian people, to address family and community violence, suicide, rejection, addictions, grief and loss and mental health issues. The program encompasses visual holistic learning modules, linking Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, to help participants with their individual insights and the journey of personal growth and wellbeing. By individualising and personalising the program through a series of cultural modules targeted at real issues that affect the lives of the participants, it makes it easier for them to engage in the program.

The Red Dust Healing program has been delivered to over 16,000 people in over 400 communities, in Australia and overseas.

## **Caritas Australia**

Caritas Australia is the international aid and development agency of the Catholic Church. We work to end poverty, promote justice and uphold human dignity. We work in partnership with marginalised communities regardless of ethnicity, political beliefs or religion. The agency has walked in solidarity with Indigenous communities since its inception, with designated First Australians Programs beginning in 1972. We are guided by the right to self-determination, we support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions, and we are committed to the principle of subsidiarity.