

Legislation to abolish cashless debit card welcome – St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia

27 July 2022

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia welcomes the Albanese Government's introduction into Parliament of legislation to abolish the Cashless Debit Card.

'The Society has been a leading voice calling for the abolition of the Cashless Debit Card,' said National President Ms Claire Victory.

'We have held concerns that this approach has had significant unintended and expensive consequences across Government and the community, including social exclusion and stigmatisation, increased financial hardship, and the erosion of autonomy and dignity.

'The Society believes the best form of assistance is the type that helps people to feel, and recover, their own dignity, as this empowers them and enables them to forge ahead and change their own destinies and those of their local communities.

'That this blunt initiative was clung to for so long, despite its extraordinary cost and lack of discernible, positive social benefits across targeted communities is a warning to all Australians about the dangers of policies and programs driven by ideology rather than evidence.

'We congratulate the Albanese Government for considering the evidence base and moving quickly to remove this punitive and paternalistic program,' Ms Victory said.

The Society welcomes the commitment by the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, to provide ongoing support to the 17,300 Cashless Debit Card participants as they transition to new income management arrangements, and to provide for people who wish to voluntarily remain on income management or in specific circumstances where this is the best option.

'Ongoing consultation and clear communication will be critical to ensure vulnerable Australians are supported as they move off the Cashless Debit Card and to provide a mechanism for people to remain on income management where they choose to do so,' Ms Victory said.

The Society welcomes Minister Rishworth's commitment to engage the community and stakeholders through a consultation process on the future of income management.

'This approach is a welcome sign that the Government is seeking to fulfil its promise to the Australian people to leave no one behind and to look after the disadvantaged. We would love to see the almost \$300 million in savings over the next four years reinvested into these communities,' Ms Victory said.

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