

Abolition of Cashless Debit Card Welcome - St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia
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The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia welcomes the passing of legislation overnight to abolish the Cashless Debit Card and to make income management voluntary.

The Society has been a leading voice calling for the abolition of the Cashless Debit Card, which has had significant unintended consequences across communities, including social exclusion and stigmatisation, increased financial hardship, and the erosion of autonomy and human dignity.

We believe the best form of assistance is the type that helps people to feel, and recover, their own human 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.

The Society congratulates the Albanese Government for considering the evidence base, listening to impacted communities, and moving quickly to remove this punitive and paternalistic program.

We commend the Government's commitment to provide ongoing support to the 17,300 Cashless Debit Card participants as they transition to new income management accounts, 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.

The Society welcomes the continuation of the Family Responsibilities Commission in Cape York and its powers of self-determination and referral for community members to go onto income management.

The Society is encouraged by the Government'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.

The Society welcomes the commitment, negotiated through consultation with the crossbench, to an evaluation of the new measures.

We commend the Government's commitment to provide additional funding for community-led and designed initiatives to support economic and employment opportunities in Cashless Debit Card sites, additional alcohol and other drug treatment programs, and more Services Australia staff to support communities transition away from the Cashless Debit Card.

While we have advocated for this redirection of funds for several years, these commitments represent a fraction of the almost \$300 million in savings that will be realised over the next four years from the abolition of the Cashless Debit Card.

We urge the Albanese Government to reinvest the full savings back into the community.

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