



New South Wales
Aboriginal Land Council

ABN 82 726 507 500
www.alc.org.au

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP
Premier of NSW
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Premier,

I write regarding any proposal to introduce cashless welfare cards in NSW.

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council (**NSWALC**) is the peak body representing Aboriginal peoples in NSW and with over 23,000 members, is the largest Aboriginal member based organisation in Australia. NSWALC is committed to ensuring a better future for all Aboriginal people by working for the return of culturally significant and economically viable land and pursuing cultural, social and economic independence for Aboriginal peoples in NSW.

NSWALC is concerned that the NSW Government is considering a proposal to expand the cashless welfare card in NSW. While NSWALC is concerned to ensure that Aboriginal peoples in NSW do not continue to face barriers to equitable economic and social development, NSWALC is of the view that income management is not an appropriate policy response to these complex social and economic barriers.

NSWALC is keen to ensure that policy approaches to addressing the issues affecting Aboriginal peoples in NSW are based on principles of self-determination and are developed with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal representative, community controlled organisations. To this end, NSWALC is concerned to ensure that discussions regarding addressing social and economic issues facing Aboriginal peoples are undertaken with NSWALC, other Aboriginal community controlled organisations and Aboriginal communities.

Governments have responsibility to support and empower Aboriginal peoples in order to gain the capacity to pursue sustainable social and economic development. There is strong evidence that suggests that through a community development and empowerment approach, that long term, sustainable social and economic outcomes can be achieved in Aboriginal communities.ⁱ

It is important to note that paternal, top-down government programs, such as cashless welfare cards, do not lead to sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal peoples. NSWALC is of the view that there must be local community decision making regarding economic and community development, rather than the imposition of top down programs that alienate Aboriginal peoples from decision making processes and do not lead to positive long term outcomes for Aboriginal peoples.ⁱⁱ

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NSWALC is concerned that the current income management proposal lacks an evidence base that clearly demonstrates its success in other trial areas. Additionally, NSWALC is concerned regarding the considerable costs associated with the administration of the cashless welfare card scheme, with reports that costs of the trial have exceeded \$18m.

NSWALC is of the view that this budget would be better invested in programs that are developed in accordance with Aboriginal peoples and communities' aspirations. These programs should address the core social and economic barriers affecting Aboriginal peoples in NSW, ensuring that there is adequate and appropriate services and support for Aboriginal peoples. These services include, but are not limited to, culturally appropriate drug and alcohol support services, services to support financial literacy and management, other family support services and capacity and community development initiatives.

As the peak representative Aboriginal organisation in NSW, NSWALC seeks to discuss Aboriginal affairs policy approaches with the NSW Government including income management, prior to the NSW Government considering a cashless welfare card in NSW. Mr James Christian PSM, Chief Executive Officer at NSWALC can be contacted at james.christian@alc.org.au or (02) 9689 4444.

Kind regards,



Roy Ah-See
Chairperson
NSW Aboriginal Land Council
Date: 26 July, 2017

ⁱ ANTAR, *A Better Way: Building healthy, safe and sustainable communities in the Northern Territory through a community development approach*, September 2011, available:

https://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/nt_community_development_policy_paper_final.pdf

ⁱⁱ Stephen Cornell, 2006, 'Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Self-Determination in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States', *Joint Occasional Papers on Native Affairs* at 13.