

Media Release

Cashless Debit Card Expansion Will Protect Vulnerable Australians

11 September 2018 -- Minderoo Foundation's GenerationOne initiative applauds the Government's expansion of the Cashless Debit Card to the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region of Queensland.

The passing of the legislation today to extend the Cashless Debit Card trial sites into the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region demonstrates the power of local communities. The Parliament has listened to the community's call for an end to the systematic abuse of welfare and the destruction caused by excessive alcohol consumption, drug use, and gambling.

The Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region will become the fourth trial site for the innovative welfare technology, following the successful and ongoing implementation of the card in the Ceduna region of South Australia and the East Kimberley and Goldfields regions of Western Australia.

"The fourth trial site of the Cashless Welfare Card in the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region will not only give relief and hope to a community wanting to end the abuse of drugs and alcohol but also gives the Government another site on which to measure the program's effectiveness," GenerationOne chief executive Dr Tim McDonald said.

In the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region, about 6,700 welfare recipients aged 35 years and under will receive the card, the majority of which are not Indigenous. Compared to other trial sites, the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay trial will provide the program with more people and greater diversity to measure impact of the card.

GenerationOne congratulates the Government for the extensive consultation conducted to ensure the Card is supported by communities and welcomes the inclusion of further independent evaluations.

GenerationOne is committed to continuing its close collaboration with the Government, Opposition, stakeholders and the community to ensure the card is implemented where communities see an urgent need for it.

"We must work together as whole communities to break the cycle of intergenerational welfare dependence," Dr McDonald continued.

"The Cashless Debit Card is an innovative solution to a complex social problem and has demonstrated positive results to date. The extension of the Cashless Debit Card trial into the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region will give hope to the many communities across Australia who have also been demanding its implementation in their community." ENDS.

Media Contact: Tess Ingram tingram@minderoo.com.au 0448 922 364

Background

The Cashless Debit Card is an effective tool to minimise the social harm caused by excessive alcohol consumption, illegal drug use, and gambling. Card holders receive 80% of their welfare benefit on a debit card and the other 20% is deposited into a standard bank account and is available to be withdrawn as cash. The Card cannot be used to buy alcohol or gambling products. A Healthy Welfare Card was one of 27 recommendations from the Forrest Review: Creating Parity report.