



Good afternoon Senators. My name is Ailan Tran. I am the Senior Communications Advisor at Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC). Our Chief Executive Officer, Mr Simon Hawkins, sends his sincerest apologies for not being able to attend today to give this statement. Simon is currently travelling to Parngurr (pronounced Bung-Or), a Martu (pronounced Mar-du) community in the Western Desert region of Western Australia.

YMAC is the Native Title Representative Body for the Traditional Owners of the Pilbara, Midwest, Murchison, and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. YMAC represents one-third of WA's total land mass and includes regional towns from Geraldton to Port Hedland and into the desert.

YMAC does not support the expansion of the cashless debit card (CDC). YMAC objects to the use of footage depicting Aboriginal people in disorderly behaviour and media coverage of child sex abuse in Aboriginal communities as an excuse to promote the dictatorial income management policy. This negative imagery perpetuates a racist stereotype that is held within the non-Aboriginal community that Aboriginal people cannot be trusted to manage their own affairs. The YMAC Board of Directors made a press release on 17 August 2017 stating their strong opposition to the CDC.

YMAC's experience with Aboriginal people has revealed a highly organised community of sophisticated thinkers. On 20 and 21 September 2017, the annual on-country bush meeting was held at Yule River, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

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Over 400 Traditional Owners from across the Pilbara passed a resolution to oppose the introduction of the CDC. This resolution came from the people. They are concerned at the lack of consultation and lack of robust data demonstrating the merits of the CDC.

More importantly, the Traditional Owners passed a resolution to form a representative group, consisting of those men and women with the authority to speak to government on behalf of their families, to advocate for action on issues that are critically important to them. These issues include: language preservation, education, housing, mental and renal healthcare, heritage protection and constitutional recognition.

Simon met with Department of Social Services representatives on 9 October 2017. The Department representatives advised that additional consultation will be conducted should a decision be made to expand the CDC program. YMAC welcomes consultation on the matter. Only a culturally sensitive process, that engages leaders who are authorised by traditional law, will give people the opportunity to make an informed decision on whether they endorse the CDC.

Finally, YMAC is concerned that Minderoo Foundation has influenced the community services agenda to the point where income management is considered a solution to welfare management. Regional welfare is a complex problem of a weak economy, lack of jobs and poor business opportunities.

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Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



No political party has in their constitution income management as a principle for advancing Australia. Income management goes against the philosophy of protecting the vulnerable, supporting self-determination and living a dignified, self-reliant life.

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