



22 August 2017

MY PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

MG Corporation chairperson Lawford Benning has crossed the floor and has publicly stated that he no longer supports the Cashless Debit Card (CDC). Mr Benning was one of four Aboriginal leaders that publicly and politically actively advocated for the introduction of the CDC trial in Kununurra just over a year ago.

When asked why he had made a complete about turn on his support and view of the CDC, Mr Benning replied Minister Tudge had many meetings with the four of us in Kununurra to negotiate the terms of the introduction of the CDC trial in Kununurra. Unfortunately, of the three commitments made by Minister Trudge to the four of us, none have been delivered as promised. The commitments included the local Aboriginal community being:

1. **Provided with sufficient support for wrap around support services for alcohol, drugs and employment issues prior to the introduction of the CDC;**
2. **Given delegated authority to assess and review local service providers of the wrap around services and if necessary shift the funding and support services to a more effective provider; and**
3. **Given delegated authority to easily assess and remove CDC recipients from the trial without the process being intrusive.**

Mr Benning has been actively canvassing community members about their support of the CDC and has found that the overwhelming majority of CDC recipients do not support the trial. Whilst some recipients do support the trial as it currently operates and others would support a modified version, they make up a small minority. Some recipients would rather not be part of the CDC trial and have removed themselves off all Centrelink benefits.

Yesterday, Mr Brent McIntyre, Assistant Director for Department of Social Services met with Mr Ian Trust, Mr Des Hill and Mr Benning, being three of the four original supporters of the CDC trial. Mr McIntyre confirmed the Minister has not yet extended the CDC trial for another year, but wants to engage with the three about:

- **Finishing the current trial and making the CDC permanent; and**
- **Implementing the CDC across Australia.**

When queried by Mr Hill and Mr Benning, Mr McIntyre confirmed the Minister had already presented the two points above to the Legislative Council. Mr Benning saw this as rubber stamping a process that is already underway to legitimise a trial that does not have broad support of CDC recipients.

Mr Benning does not shy away from the fact that he was part of the four supporting the CDC trial and makes mention of this every time he canvasses community members. He is also very disappointed in the inaccurate recent publicity regarding the call to extend the Kununurra trial site as well as expanding the number of trial sites. Mr Benning is speaking up for the low profile majority to help counter what some of the high profile minority are saying about the CDC.