



## **THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP**

Minister for Families and Social Services

## **THE HON KEITH PITT MP**

Member for Hinkler

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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#### **Cashless Debit Card to help Bundaberg and Hervey Bay**

The Cashless Debit Card will address difficult social issues affecting young people and children in the Hinkler electorate after legislation passed today that guarantees the introduction of the trial to the region.

Parliament today passed the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Cashless Debit Card Trial Expansion) Bill 2018*, which added the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region as the fourth trial site and expanded the number of participants to up to 15,000.

In the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region, around 6,000 people, aged 35 years and under who receive Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance (Job seeker), Parenting Payment (Single) or Parenting Payment (Partnered) will receive the card.

The region has the second highest youth unemployment rate in Queensland at 28.7 per cent with many now experiencing intergenerational welfare dependence. Of those who are aged under 25 on welfare as at 30 June 2016, 90 per cent had a parent who was also on welfare during the past 15 years.

Minister for Families and Social Services Paul Fletcher said the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region was selected following calls from key stakeholders in the region to address social issues such as high youth unemployment and intergenerational welfare dependence.

“The card helps people manage their income and stabilise their lives by putting 80 per cent of a person’s welfare payment onto a debit card which can be used to purchase essentials such as food, rent, school supplies and pay bills,” Mr Fletcher said.

“This portion of a person’s welfare payment cannot be used to buy alcohol, gamble or withdraw cash.

“Intergenerational welfare dependence is ruining families; there are some young people who have never seen their parents, and even their grandparents, hold down a job.

“Doing nothing is not an option, and combined with an investment of \$1 million for support services, the Government is helping people in the region to address serious and ongoing issues.”

Member for Hinkler Keith Pitt MP said the Cashless Debit Card will help tackle problems and make a positive change to the local community.

“The Cashless Debit Card will be targeted to people in our electorate that need help and it will make a difference in the lives of children who are missing out,” Mr Pitt said.

Preparations for the rollout of the trial to the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region will commence over coming months.

The Cashless Debit Card has been operating in Ceduna, South Australia, since 15 March 2016, East Kimberley, Western Australia, since 26 April 2016 and the Goldfields region, Western Australia since 26 March 2018.

Independent research into the Cashless Debit Card has shown positive results in Ceduna and East Kimberley where significantly less drinking, gambling and drug use has been reported.

A second evaluation will commence shortly and will provide valuable evidence on the longer-term impacts of the trial in Ceduna and East Kimberley, as well as early implementation outcomes in the Goldfields region.

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