

FEDERAL–STATE RELATIONS — CASHLESS DEBIT CARD TRIALS

1564. Hon Robin Scott to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Federal–State Relations:

Referring the Minister to trials of the Cashless Debit Card in South Australia at Ceduna and within Western Australia in the East Kimberley and the Goldfields, and to a report of the Australian National Audit Office “*The Implementation and Performance of the Cashless Debit Card Trial*” dated 17 July 2018 [URL <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/implementation-and-performance-cashless-debit-card-trial>], will the Minister confirm that in respect of the trials conducted at Ceduna and East Kimberley, the Commonwealth Auditor General wrote, “*Conclusion 8. The Department of Social Services largely established appropriate arrangements to implement the Cashless Debit Card Trial, however, its approach to monitoring and evaluation was inadequate. As a consequence, it is difficult to conclude whether there had been a reduction in social harm and whether the card was a lower cost welfare quarantining approach. 9. Social Services established appropriate arrangements for consultation, communicating with communities and for governance of the implementation of CDCT. Social Services was responsive to operational issues as they arose during the trial. However, it did not actively monitor risks identified in risk plans and there were deficiencies in elements of the procurement processes. 10. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the trial were in place although key activities were not undertaken or fully effective, and the level of unrestricted cash available in the community was not effectively monitored. Social Services established relevant and mostly reliable key performance indicators, but they did not cover some operational aspects of the trial such as efficiency, including cost. There was a lack of robustness in data collection and the department’s evaluation did not make use of all available administrative data to measure the impact of the trial including any change in social harm. Aspects of the proposed wider roll-out of the CDC were informed by learnings from the trial, but the trial was not designed to test the scalability of the CDC and there was no plan in place to undertake further evaluation.*”:

- (a) taking into account the adverse report from the Auditor-General, will the Minister encourage the Federal Government to abandon its plans for issuing the Cashless Debit Card in Western Australia in its present form?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) For communities where there is strong support for a Cashless Debit Card system, the Minister does not object to its introduction. It is the Commonwealth’s responsibility to ensure that there are no unintended consequences of the Cashless Debit Card system by correcting existing difficulties and providing additional support services to Card holders, and ensuring there is a robust evaluation of the trials.