

YMAC Board Does Not Support Cashless Welfare Card

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Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the Native Title Representative Body for the Traditional Owners of the Pilbara, Midwest, Murchison, and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia (WA). YMAC represents 24 native title claim groups and supports a further eight native title prescribed body corporate (PBC) organisations; and provides legal services to other related entities. In total, YMAC's remit represents one-third of WA's total land mass and includes regional towns from Geraldton to Port Hedland and into the desert.

The YMAC Board of Directors are representatives of Aboriginal native title claim groups, PBCs, corporations and communities across WA. The YMAC Board **does not support** the cashless welfare card being promoted by Andrew Forrest because it unfairly discriminates against Aboriginal people. The Minderoo Foundation video displaying footage of Aboriginal violence is presented out of context; and suggests that this is the expectation that the wider Australian community should have of Aboriginal people. It is an attempt to dismantle Aboriginal culture. The negative imagery is not in any way a fair representation of the way Aboriginal people conduct themselves. The video targets vulnerable people and unfairly exploits them. It perpetuates a racist stereotype that is held within the non-Aboriginal community that these people cannot be trusted to manage their own affairs. This propaganda is damaging to the good work that many are doing to build positive relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The Minderoo Foundation video demeans people in a shallow attempt at promoting a solution that is known to be ineffective and promotes a wider divide between our citizens. The type of dictatorial approach in addressing Aboriginal issues is an archaic way of dealing with the relationship. In support of Senator Dodson's comments, *regional WA towns are not 'war zones' and the people who live there should be treated with respect. We need community buy-in to develop strategies to deal with the factors that make communities fail. The goal has to be to make them flourish with incentives rather than condemn them and reduce them to dependence and constant surveillance.*

Does Andrew Forrest have the authority of elders to advocate the cashless welfare card? As the peak representative body for over one million square kilometres of Country in the affected regions discussed, YMAC has yet to be consulted, and as Board members who live on Country, with an ear to the ground we have not heard of any widespread consultation taking place.



Taking into account the trials that have been conducted, there has been no definitive evidence that the cashless card will solve the issues it was intended to on a wider audience. In fact, evidence was presented this week at the inquest into Aboriginal youth suicide in North West WA that the cashless welfare card contributed to the problems of violence and mental health. The YMAC Board welcomes the opportunity for consultation and collaboration with Andrew Forrest, The Minderoo Foundation and the Australian government. Together we can design and implement solutions that are consistent with Aboriginal people's need for self-determination and the right to pursue self-developed solutions.

YMAC CEO Simon Hawkins states "... YMAC and the Australian public needs to see the data from the trial of the program to determine the merits of the cashless card, not just selective evidence from a few individuals. Broader consultation with the Aboriginal communities likely to be impacted by the program is needed to empower Aboriginal people to make informed choices on these matters."

Ms Natalie Parker
Co-Chair (Pilbara)

Mr Peter Windie
Co-Chair (Yamatji)

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for native title claims in the Pilbara, Murchison and Gascoyne areas of Western Australia. The organisation has a representative area of almost one million square kilometres and represents over 20 native title claims, all with their own language, culture and traditions.

YMAC is a not-for-profit organisation run by an Aboriginal Board. It provides a range of services to its members including claim and future-act representation, heritage protection services, community and economic development, and natural resource management.

For interviews please contact **Melissa Lucioli** on 0458 010 483 or at mlucioli@ymac.org.au