



## **The Cashless Society**

### **Is it really going to work without real money?**

It has been on the cards for a while. Banks in lower-population communities suddenly decide to close their branches. Even before ours eventually shut down, staff seemed reluctant to deal in cash transactions over the counter; except when the teller machine in the street outside wasn't working. Then they had no choice, but they weren't happy about it. Once the branch of our bank finally did close we weren't over-concerned. We could still withdraw cash from our usual account at the Post Office; and many others didn't even need to do that. They could use the EFTPOS facilities in local stores, taking out extra cash when paying for purchases with their card. Then the other day we received a cheque in the mail. Fortunately we have a credit card with another bank which has, for the moment at least, deigned to keep its local branch open; and we can use the cheque to pay off some of that account. Were this not the case, we would have had to drive thirty minutes to another town. These are minor inconveniences not necessarily indicative of the subject in question; but withdrawal of a few public services is the thin end of the wedge.

Generally, routine business transactions can be dealt with electronically, and most institutions encourage this method. That's fine if a person is au fait with computers and suchlike; but what about our senior citizens? Quite a few don't understand the technology and still prefer to pay cash. It will definitely be tough on them; and it won't be all that easy for the rest of us when the ramifications are considered.

Think on those times when it's not really practical to use credit or debit cards. The COD pizza delivery, for instance. Fancy stopping off for a cup of tea or coffee? \$3 might have covered it, if you had a note or some loose change; but if the minimum card purchase was \$10 you'd probably have to buy a cake or two as well as the drink, or go without. Picking up a jam doughnut to eat when you got home would likely be a thing of the past; unless it was a very expensive one, or you bought a couple more to make up the price. The morning paper would probably be in the same category – pay for it on the card...? I doubt it would be acceptable to the newsagent. Still, I daresay the powers that be will come up with a solution: maybe a re-chargeable small-purchase card which could even be used for items from a vending machine. There will be many more complications that need consideration before cash money can be dispensed with entirely.

Trades people wouldn't be over-keen without the odd cash-in-the-hand job, because they would have to bill everything and pay tax on it. Some casual workers would be impacted in a similar way too. On the darker side, thieves would certainly be put out. What would be the point of breaking and entering to steal items they couldn't sell for cash because there wasn't any, not in the modern day? Mind you, by the same token crime figures might fall, even on the drug scene; at least you'd think so; until, that is, organised crime

syndicates found a way around the problem. And I wonder how the big bad boys are going to launder huge amounts of cash when it only exists as figures on a balance sheet? I don't doubt that they will.

Going cashless will cause everyone a fair bit of turmoil, initially anyway. We shall have to get used to conducting all business online or using credit cards. Electronic is quicker, more efficient, and quite safe; so we are told. Well, we already know it is far from safe. As for quick and easy, when the power goes out or the Internet suddenly ceases to work, chaos rules. We had a taste of this during cyclone Seroja when the only purchases we could make were limited to the actual cash we had on us. Fortunately it was only temporary; but it was a real hassle.

Personally, I don't see how a cashless society can work without creating a mountain of problems that haven't even been considered yet. Like, for instance, kids' pocket money. Will they have to have a debit card? The true ramifications don't bear thinking about; but I'm sure some smart money mogul will come up with the answers. Whether we like them or not remains to be seen. Hopefully this won't happen until way in the future.

**A Season of Happiness - helping you towards a better lifestyle**



**For a look at some more informative articles on a variety of subjects just return to the web page**