



First People deserve decent jobs – Reform the Community Development Program

Issued April 2018

We pledge ourselves to seek the correction of injustices wherever they occur. We will work for the eradication of poverty and racism within our society and beyond. We affirm the rights of all people to equal educational opportunities, adequate health care, freedom of speech, employment or dignity in unemployment if work is not available. We will oppose all forms of discrimination which infringe basic rights and freedoms.

Uniting Church in Australia, Statement to the Nation at the Inaugural Assembly Meeting 1977

The Community Development Program (CDP) is a Commonwealth Government program that has resulted in discrimination against and exploitation of many First People who have been locked out of the normal job market. The CDP commenced on 1 July 2015, replacing the Remote Jobs and Community Programme (RJCP) which ran from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015.

The CDP is targeted towards job seekers, both First Peoples and non-Indigenous, living in remote regions and who are in receipt of Newstart Allowance, Parenting Payment or Youth Allowance benefits.

A total of 42 providers deliver the CDP programme across 60 regions in more than 1,000 communities. Around 37,000 people are in the CDP, more than 80 per cent of whom are First Peoples.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, has said of the CDP:

The rate at which jobseekers within the Programme are penalized is around 27 times that of mainstream, predominantly non-indigenous, jobseekers. In practice, these requirements are discriminatory, being substantially more onerous than those that apply to predominantly non-indigenous jobseekers.

Examples of the discrimination that people on the CDP are subjected to compared to people seeking work who are not on the CDP are:

- People on the CDP are forced into Work for the Dole labour straight away, which is not the case with people seeking work on Newstart who are not on the CDP;
- People on the CDP are given fewer options than people seeking work elsewhere in Australia, such as training, voluntary work or participation in non-vocational support programs; and
- People not on the CDP who are under 25 can undertake voluntary internships for up to 12 weeks with a business and will receive an extra \$100 per week to their Newstart (which still gives these businesses a cheap source of labour), while CDP participants can be forced to work for businesses with no extra payment.

The results of this discriminatory treatment mean that while CDP participants are only 5% of people seeking employment nationally they get 60% of the social security penalties imposed on such people and nearly 80% of the more serious penalties. Fines imposed on First People job seekers under the CDP scheme are blamed for driving up hunger and poverty in some remote First People communities.

The CDP creates the opportunity for employers to substitute paid CDP workers for paid employees. Research has shown that local governments are likely to rely on CDP participants to do tasks that fall within the responsibility of council workers, and private employers asking for CDP labour rather than employing people who work under normal employment conditions. CDP participants are a cheap form of labour as an alternative to employees working at least on the minimum wage with employment benefits such as superannuation and compensation in the case of a workplace injury.

First people communities and organisations had little say in the design of the CDP and have no genuine decision making power over the type of projects, work and activities that are undertaken and valued and given legitimacy in the program.

Many First People on the CDP report that it is demoralising and disempowering.

After much struggle and debate, in 1994 the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia discovered God's call, accepted this invitation and entered into an ever deepening covenantal relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. This was so that all may see a destiny together, praying and working together for a fuller expression of our reconciliation in Jesus Christ.

Preamble to the Uniting Church Constitution.

What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion
Minister for Indigenous Affairs
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

E-mail: nigel.scullion@ia.pm.gov.au

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern at the discriminatory nature of the Community Development Program, which sees higher requirements placed on mainly Indigenous Australians in remote Australia than on people seeking employment elsewhere in Australia.
- Express deep concern that the design of the CDP results in Indigenous Australians being subjected to penalties at 27 times the rate of people seeking employment not on the CDP.
- Ask that Indigenous organisations be able to work with the Commonwealth Government to develop a new program to assist Indigenous Australians in remote Australia who are looking for work, such as the proposal put forward by the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory in May 2017.
- Ask that the programme move from a punitive, attendance-focused approach towards one which rewards participation in activities that are selected and valued by the community and, in turn, provide skills and experiences which improve the job-readiness and quality of life of all participants.