

**Aboriginal Peak Organisations  
Northern Territory (APO NT)**

Wednesday 29 September 2021

Committee Secretary  
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

[fpa.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:fpa.sen@aph.gov.au)

**Legislation Committee consideration of the *Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021***

**Response to question of APO NT**

At the Committee hearing on 23 September 2021 Senator McCarthy asked whether there are any commonalities between this legislation and its approach and the Fair Work Strong Communities proposal developed by APO NT and many other organisations.

APO NT response:

The *Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021* would establish an income support supplement for people who are doing work that is 'like having a job'<sup>1</sup>.

This is very different from the Fair Work Strong Communities proposal which says that, when people are working, they should do this as employees with the full rights and entitlements of employees.

Under the Fair Work Strong Communities proposal someone working 16 hours per week in a community organisation in a remote area would be able to receive the same level of income that they would if they were working in a similar role in a non-remote area. As the table in our submission shows, this Bill would not achieve that goal. A minimum wage worker working 16 hours per week in Darwin would have a fortnightly income of \$990-\$1040 (including part-payment of income support), while a person who receives the proposed supplement would have a maximum fortnightly income of \$878. In addition, those receiving the supplement would not be entitled to superannuation, leave, or to be treated as employees by their 'host' organisation.

The Explanatory Memorandum suggests that the supplement would be associated with activities that might help people move into employment. However the Government has not made a commitment to make sure that more jobs are available for people to move into. There is no reason to believe that these 'work like activities' would be any more successful in moving people into

---

<sup>1</sup> Explanatory Memorandum p.3.

employment than the thousands of Work for the Dole activities delivered over the last 6 years. On the other hand there is a risk that the Bill could entrench a pattern of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working without proper pay, conditions or recognition.

A major goal of the Fair Work Strong Communities proposal is to shift the balance in remote communities so that more people are employed and gaining the full benefits of employment. These benefits are not just financial. They include having your work recognised as valuable, and being treated as an employee. For young people, employment is essential to reducing risks of long term poverty and joblessness. In the Fair Work Strong Communities proposal we are asking the Government to support Indigenous Controlled Community Organisations to create job opportunities, rather than create another version of Work for the Dole.

Yours sincerely

John Paterson

On behalf of APO NT Governing Group