



Community Bridging Services (CBS) Inc. Response to the Senate Inquiry

Implementation and Evaluation of the Community Development Program (CDP) May 2017

Community Bridging Services (CBS Inc.) has been providing Disability Employment Services (DES) in rural and remote South Australia since 1996. Since its original inception as RJCP, CBS Inc has been a sub-contractor of Complete Personnel (CP). CP currently delivers the Community Development Programme (CDP) in three regions of SA. As part of this sub contract agreement we provide specialised employment services to participants with significant barriers /disability to employment and having a partial work capacity.

The basis of this senate inquiry is to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of the Community Development Programme (CDP). With this in mind, we have the following opinions and suggestions to contribute with a focus on the operational aspects of the program. In particular in reference to the Impact that CDP has had on the rights of participants and their communities, including the appropriateness of the payments and penalties systems. CBS has a focus on people with a disability in our responses who form a significant membership of the CDP participant group.

The current CDP is simply not suited to remote regions and those living in them and it is far too complex and basically inhumane in practice. It's a negative model and a negative view of participants involved.

1. The current CDP supports are not working and have become more complex and less motivating for a significant number of participants – it just doesn't fit the environment and social context of remote regions of Australia.
2. There is simply insufficient businesses, community activities and people to make the current model work effectively in the CDP regions.
3. The compliance framework encourages poverty and social exclusion and it is expensive to implement on a daily basis. It discourages hope and reinforces poverty. It is not an improvement on the RJCP.
4. There is not enough opportunity, infrastructure and community support in remote regions to support the current Work for the Dole type of activities of 25 hours a week. There is also inequity in the requirements for CDP clients - mainstream clients are required to do 15 hours per week, CDP client need to do 25. This is why there are so many reported infringements.
5. People with a disability require a specific individualised model, and Work for the Dole does not support such an individualised approach. As such, people with a disability are receiving a

less effective service than under Disability Employment Services (DES) and under the previous RJCP. The result is less employment outcomes for people with a disability in the current CDP.

6. Structured projects need to have critical mass to make it financially operable which means that mass numbers are placed into projects that may not necessarily be appropriate for the individual.
7. People with a disability are forced to participate in work for the dole at the max work capacity, but when they secure work, the employment hours are assessed at the minimum capacity (i.e. 8-14 hours when they must work 14 hours in a WFD/activity. In paid employment they only need to work 8 hours)
8. People with a disability are also further disenfranchised, as a group approach to service provision just does not provide the individual support that those living in larger communities receive via DES. It just doesn't support people with a disability as well as RJCP or DES.

A more effective response is to encourage ownership and positive incentives for participants to be more productive, learn skills, work and build businesses and productivity in their local communities.

Forcing people to change through punitive responses just doesn't work and is working especially in complex local communities. Participants have to earn change and buy into it because they can see the benefit.

There needs to be a major shift in focus that would encourage the implementation of the key principles in this paper and a more positive and respectful approach to participants involved, while still having safeguards to prevent the misuse of funds. This would involve a range of changes that would save on administration, create more local ownership and be better placed to build more local communities and trust between, participants in remote areas, Government and service providers.

1. Have a safety net of Youth allowance, Newstart or DSP allowance for those people who do not participate in any structured/supervised community work, training, education, social enterprise, structured volunteer work or structured pre-employment training. This will stop human beings in remote areas from starving and thinking of crime just to survive. This would also save on compliance.
2. Provide incentives of increased income e. g. the minimum wage for those of a specific age who undertake structured/supervised community work, training, education, social enterprise, structured volunteer work, or structured pre-employment training at an agreed set minimum number of hours per week. If you do more and learn more you get paid more.
3. Provide incentives for people to stay in their communities – with CDP, and the requirement for activities, people are driven out of their communities and into nearby townships which results in a major strain on community, housing and health services. Also results in these people being marginalised in the new community.
4. Innovation, social enterprise, infrastructure and business development funds administered through third party RJCP services to ensure there is local arms-length support and financial

expertise that funds are used effectively. Ensure that the NEIS program and/or reintroduce the Small Enterprise Incentive Program for CDP regions so there is a supportive model and mentoring for small business building.

5. A consistent and effective remote support network that ensures there is ownership by local communities, input support and control.
6. That people with a disability are included and not forgotten in planning, control and rights. This is significant as the NDIS is implemented in Australia.
7. That there is a level of human respect and human rights underlining all principles, policies and activities, so we avoid pockets of third world Australia in our own backyard.

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