



Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021

CPSU SUBMISSION

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

Email: fpa.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is the primary union representing Australian Public Service employees. We are committed to providing a strong voice for our members in key public policy and political debates.

The CPSU welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this Senate inquiry into the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021.

The CPSU consulted with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to ascertain their views about the proposed Bill. The CPSU National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cabinet (NATSIC) is the union's peak consultative body for our Indigenous members, comprising almost 1,600 members.

CPSU members are firmly of the view that any replacement for the Community Development Program should be voluntary and lead to real jobs. While the Bill indicates it will be voluntary, the CPSU is concerned the Explanatory Memorandum explicitly states that payments are intentionally being kept low at the minimum wage to "enable transition to paid work". The Bill also denies access to paid sick leave, workers compensation and superannuation to those in the pilot as they will be exempt from those relevant federal laws.

Given the Explanatory Memorandum states "eligible job seekers will voluntarily participate in a role in government services or a community organisation for between 15 and 18 hours per week building important skills and experience," those in the pilot should be classified as workers with access to leave and work health and safety protections. They should be paid at the equivalent award or enterprise agreement rate for the type of work they will do, and it should be a genuine pathway to employment and should recognise Caring for Country activities. Examples could include but not limited to flood mitigation, fire abatement and management, environmental revegetation, natural resource management, protection of cultural sites and wildlife and habitat restoration - looking after threatened and endangered species.

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021: CPSU submission

While this Bill is focused on one element of the new pilot, the CPSU would like to emphasise that the co-design process for the pilot must not be outsourced. It should be run by National Indigenous Australians Agency and be adequately resourced to ensure there are dedicated Australian Public Service staff overseeing the program.

CPSU members are also strongly of the view that skills development must be a central component of this pilot program and there is a need for mobile TAFEs to support the training of workers on country.

The CPSU is happy to provide information on the matters raised in this submission and supplementary information on other relevant issues.

Yours sincerely

Melissa Donnelly

National Secretary