

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

7.8 The committee recommends that the Australian Government immediately replace the current CDP compliance and penalty regime with obligations that are no more onerous than those of other income support recipients. CDP participants must have the same legal rights and other responsibilities as other income support participants, taking into account special circumstances such as remote locations and cultural obligations.

Recommendation 2

7.9 The committee recommends that CDP requirements should be adjusted in order to ensure that participants are able to meet them for the majority of the time and are more closely aligned with the requirements of other income support participants. Those in work or work-like activity should have the general obligations and benefits of any worker.

7.10 The committee recommends that eight-week serious non-compliance penalties should not be applied during this transition period except under exceptional circumstances.

Recommendation 3

7.12 The committee recommends that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet undertake an immediate audit of all existing Community Development Program providers. The audit should assess service delivery quality, and employment outcomes in order to inform any extension of contracts until the roll-out of a new program. In cases where underperformance is identified, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet should work to ensure appropriate action is taken to ensure that providers meet expected standards.

Recommendation 4

7.14 The committee recommends an audit be conducted of interpreter services available to clients and Department of Human Services officers. The committee recommends the Department of Human Services invest in identifying, training and employing local people in remote communities and community controlled organisations who can provide Centrelink CDP-related liaison services in local Indigenous languages.

Recommendation 5

7.16 The committee recommends that Centrelink provides a dedicated telephone service for CDP participants staffed by officers familiar with the CDP program.

Recommendation 6

7.19 The committee recommends that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, led by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, engage in genuine and comprehensive consultation with remote communities, Indigenous organisations, employment providers and other stakeholders on the reforms required to be made to the Community Development Program.

Recommendation 7

7.20 The committee recommends that the reform process for any new program should be focussed on the goal of community empowerment, and give active consideration to the proposals as outlined in the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory's submission and supported by others. The establishment of an indigenous-led board and local governance committees as recommended by Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory should be considered.

7.21 Communities must be given a greater say in how a community development program is delivered in their area including the prioritisation of projects and the nature of approved work activities. Greater community control should harness the skills, experiences and knowledge of local community and Indigenous organisations.

Recommendation 8

7.24 The committee recommends that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provide practical support to local remote and Indigenous organisations to build governance and service delivery capacity in areas that enables these organisations to successfully tender for the new community development program.

Recommendation 9

7.28 The committee recommends that the Australian Government implement a payment scheme for remote jobseekers with income based on participation in agreed work-like activities, and incentives for additional activities in community development programs. The committee recommends that participation in community development program work activities should be compensated at an hourly rate commensurate with the national minimum wage.

Recommendation 10

7.30 The committee recommends that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet carefully consider and, where appropriate, minimise the administrative processes required of providers engaged in the new community development program.

Recommendation 11

7.33 The committee recommends that funding agreements between the Australian Government and providers delivering services in future community development programs include a requirement that information on the quantum

of funding, the allocation of funding and the investment in training and basic vocational skills be collected and made publicly available. The publicly available financial information should include the dollar value of Centrelink payments that are foregone by participants due to CDP breaches.

Recommendation 12

7.36 The committee recommends that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet work closely with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) to ensure that remote communities are aware of the lending products that IBA can provide and assist individuals to lodge applications.

Recommendation 13

7.40 The committee recommends that the penalty funds (breaches) currently diverted from the community as a result of non-compliance and any ancillary payments allocated for providers should be applied to support local community development program activities identified by the community, or to top-up specific wages where appropriate.

7.41 The committee recommends that the Australian Government provide additional funding for community development activities, similar to the Community Development Funding previously available under the Remote Jobs and Communities Programs.

Recommendation 14

7.46 The committee recommends that the Australian Government work closely with all relevant state and territory and local governments to develop a five-year strategic plan for infrastructure and service delivery in remote communities. The strategic plan should be updated annually.

Recommendation 15

7.50 The committee recommends that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet mandate that all service providers delivering the new community development program, in consultation with the local community and potential employers, develop a local jobs plan taking into consideration the job-readiness of the community. The local jobs plan would seek to transition service delivery staffed by non-local personnel, apart from highly specialised professionals, to local employment in a staged manner. In addition, the local jobs plan should ensure that paid work experience and training positions are created to enable young people to gain employment experience on leaving school.

Recommendation 16

7.51 The committee recommends that the definition of work activities under the revised CDP program should be expanded to include cultural transmission activities that are prioritised by the local community in their local jobs plans.

Recommendation 17

7.55 The committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office conduct an audit of Australian Government contracts that relate to service delivery in remote locations. This audit should have a specific focus on the use of, and compliance with, Indigenous Employment Targets.

7.56 As part of this audit, the committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office include state and territory government contracts where the Australian Government has made a funding contribution for a particular purpose. The audit should also report on how these contracts impact on Closing the Gap employment targets.

Recommendation 18

7.57 The committee recommends that the Australian Government review the guidelines for Indigenous employment and work closely with the Council of Australian Governments in order to establish a uniform approach to the application of Indigenous Employment Targets to state, territory and Commonwealth contracts in remote locations. Such an approach should include a mandatory target that forms the basis of a key performance indicator which is then used to assess the performance of a contractor for a current contract and used to assess suitability for subsequent tenders.

Recommendation 19

7.59 The committee recommends that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet undertake an organisational review of its regional network to ensure that it has the capabilities necessary to properly administer a program featuring decentralised and local decision making focussed on the needs of remote communities.

Recommendation 20

7.62 The committee recommends that the Australian Government formally cost the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory submission. This costing should include a comparison to the complete costs of the previous Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) and the current CDP, including costs such as the portion of the Department of Social Services' budget (including outsourced funding arrangements) spent on administering the CDP.

Recommendation 21

7.63 The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in designing the new program, ensures that a rigorous, transparent and impartial evaluation process be developed to guide implementation and delivery. This evaluation function may be considered as part of the role for the planned Indigenous Commissioner in the Productivity Commission.

Recommendation 22

7.65 The committee recommends that during consultations on the new program that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Centrelink actively explore the reasons for disengagement and seek to develop strategies to address this issue.

7.66 The committee also recommends that Centrelink take immediate proactive steps to engage with participants who have disengaged from income support and employment programs and assist them to reconnect.

