

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018**

**Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio**

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
**Outcome/Program:** Outcome 2: Indigenous  
**Topic:** Community Development Programme

**Senator:** Dodson

**Question reference number:** 90

**Type of question:** FPA Friday 26 May 2017, page 35

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 7 July 2017

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

Senator DODSON: My question is really about if people have raised the nature of the program being draconian?

Senator Scullion: Yes. There have been some quite specific examples provided of stores having a downturn in their turnover as examples of why people are going hungry. These are serious matters. We have investigated all of those matters and we have found on every occasion that there is no clear evidence to support the supposition that this is causing those problems. Usually, not on all occasions, we are able to demonstrate that the downturn has been duplicated in an upturn in alternative stores. So the total amount that has been expended in that process has not caused that. But we have also looked carefully at the actual breaching events. I could perhaps provide a page on notice, but we would see that it is in the 90s that a full exemption is granted because people comply. So whilst the numbers are high, people comply. We inherited a program with seven per cent of people engaged in it. Since this balance compliance process, we now have 67 per cent. That number is unsurprising due to the RJCP's significant failure—and I say that because 60 per cent of people left and went onto passive welfare. That is what I inherited. I think, by and large, there has been a huge net benefit to people who are no longer on passive welfare and are engaged positively in community activities.

**Answer:**

The Community Development Programme (CDP) is designed around the unique social and labour market conditions found in remote Australia. It provides meaningful work experience and training to support jobseekers to enter the workforce.

The CDP and jobactive programme both work within requirements set out in the social security law and have comparable participation requirements. The CDP is not more onerous than jobactive, it is tailored to the circumstances of remote regions and their job seekers. In most cases, people in receipt of activity tested benefits nationally (e.g. Newstart or Youth Allowance) are required to meet Mutual Obligation Requirements, which can include up to

25 hours per week of activities. However, the number of hours a job seeker is required to undertake is unique to that individual and is determined based on the person's assessed capacity to work and age and caring responsibilities.

Furthermore, job seekers under both the CDP and jobactive are subject to the same, national Job Seeker Compliance Framework, with strong protections and review processes in place to ensure it is applied fairly.

Further details on investigations into specific claims that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has undertaken are provided in the response to PM92.