



Aarnja^{Ltd}

The Regional Body for Kimberley Aboriginal people...

Aarnja Ltd submission to:

Finance and Public Administration References Committee Inquiry.

The appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of the Community Development Program (CDP).

Submitter details:

Aarnja LTD

Office address : Unit 3/19 Hamersley St
BROOME WA 6725

Postal Address : PO Box 8426
BROOME WA 6725

SUBMISSION BODY – Inquiry Terms of Reference :

a. The adequacy of the policy process that led to the design of the CDP.

The Community Development Program (CDP) is the next iteration, of the Remote Jobs Community Program (RJCP). The Remote Communities Job Program provides the Policy foundation for the current CDP.

RJCP commenced 1 July, 2013 and transitioned to the current CDP July 2015.

We understand that The RJCP was designed and developed by The Department of Education Employment and Work place Relations (DEEWR), The Department of Social Services and The National Employment Services Association.

It is our understanding that the Government of the day, policy approach was one of mainstreaming programs and objectives, and occurred at a time when Australian Government had an approach of doing things to Aboriginal people, not with aboriginal people. An example of the approach was the Northern Territory Intervention, which reflects the policy approach of the time, which co-incided with the abolition of the original Community Development Employment Program which had been operating from the 1970's, as an Aboriginal specific program.

The other major policy factor was implementation of Commonwealth Government Machinery of Government changes relating to procurement of services. Which reflects in the procurement of RJCP providers which was undertaken on an Employment Services procurement model, being the operational system of the responsible Commonwealth Department DEEWR.

DEEWR contracted the National Employment Services Association (NESA) NGO, to work with and build capacity of the RJCP providers, in my capacity as the Chairperson elect of the Broome Regional RJCP provider, I held the opinion that NESA also assisted DEEWR in designing the operational systems and RJCP policy based on the mainstream Employment Services model of the day.

Aboriginal Community and Organisation input into the design of the RJCP was nonexistent and consultation was conducted as a Tender Briefing, Procurement "Probity" was the approach taken by Department Staff, who did not answer questions, did not or could not depart from the request for Tender framework, meaning Aboriginal Community or organizations views or opinions were not heard or accommodated on the RJCP, which today is The CDP, the subject of this inquiry.

From an Aboriginal Community perspective, the RJCP / CDP program and policy was developed under a mainstreaming of government services policy, designed and developed solely by Government, which I believe is the role and prerogative of Government, however ignored the Kimberley Aboriginal Communities remote locality, the lack of a major employer or industry and communities connection to the land.

b. The Nature and underlying causes of joblessness in Remote Communities.

Joblessness is related to the absence of an employment market, industry and locality, many Communities / Towns based in Northern Australia struggle with having a sustainable local economy which involves having a local job market, which in turn stimulate a local economy.

The Aboriginal Affairs approach over the past thirty years has been welfare, which has created dependency and inertia in creating economic independence and sustainability both for the individual or community.

Remoteness, also means that access to Education, Vocational Training and support services is often piecemeal and inadequate, given the financial costs of providing services in remote locations.

c. The ability of the CDP to provide long term solutions to joblessness, and to achieve social, economic and cultural outcomes that meet the needs and aspirations of remote indigenous people.

The CDP program in its current design, will not achieve an outcome that reduces joblessness and opportunity or social dysfunction.

Why do remote dwelling Indigenous people live in remote communities?

Culture and preservation of culture and the cultural obligation to look after country and maintain their traditional estate, from an Aboriginal perspective is important to self and community re identity, maintenance and preservation of Australia's oldest living culture.

d. The impact of the CDP on the rights of participants and their communities, including the appropriateness of the payments and penalties system.

The CDP system treats remote dwelling participants differently from other Australians accessing income support from the Australian social security safety net.

The facts speak for themselves 30,000 penalties applied to CDP participants, 25 hours participation requirement, above what is required for the majority of jobless persons with a participation requirement.

e. The funding of the CDP, including the use of unspent funds in the program.

Perusal of publically available Aboriginal Community controlled CDP providers annual audited Financial Statements suggest that providers are accumulating significant unexpended surplus, which in an ideal scenario would be expended on building capacity of the participants.

Please Note: We do not intend to single out Aboriginal community controlled CDP providers, it is just that the information is publically available.

Corporate employment service provider's financial information is not publically accessible.

A rationale for the underutilization of CDP funds by providers, could be because of the onerous CDP contract compliance requirements, which requires CDP providers staff resources to be engaged in meeting the compliance framework of the CDP Program, as opposed to creating and monitoring participation activities for the participants and their communities.

A further reason is that Remote dwelling Aboriginal CDP participants could lay claim to be the most trained individuals in the country, "Training for Training sake" employment or job markets are nonexistent in the majority of remote localities.

The CDP program ineffectiveness is as a result of budget repair / cost savings cuts to Indigenous Affairs budget.

Unaware of what happens to CDP unexpended funds or financial surplus.

f. The extent of consultation and engagement with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities in the design and implementation of the CDP, and the role for local decision making within the program.

The CDP program policy focus is about Providers and Government, not ATSI Communities, or participants, the history of the design of the CDP policy is outlined in point a.

ATSI communities have had no input into the design and implementation of the CDP.

The extent of CDP / RJCP consultation and engagement with ATSI communities, was to advise of the new model and that the new RJCP / CDP model required one provider per region, in the West Kimberley ATSI remote communities that were existing CDEP providers were advised of the rationalization and the procurement process.

g. Alternative approaches to addressing joblessness and community development in remote Indigenous communities;

For Remote Aboriginal Communities located in the Northern regions of Western Australia they may not exist given the Western Australian Government Policy position of closing or not providing essential services to remote aboriginal communities, a position that is still WA Government policy aside from 10 named communities in the Kimberley.

Alignment with Northern Australia white paper policy objectives offers development opportunities as does Native title opportunities.

Northern Australia white paper workforce objectives.

The north's workforce needs are unique. Many businesses effectively shut down or cut back during the wet season; working long hours in the dry season. Tourism workers often need to work outside standard hours, while mining or agriculture workers can be required to stay onsite for extended periods of time. The Government will build on existing initiatives across Australia, including reforms to higher education, skills and training and a new \$5.5 billion Jobs and Small Business Package to create the right conditions for small business to grow and create new jobs.

The Government is also helping more Australians to work in the North by:

- Supporting Northern business to invest in the skills of their workforce with additional assistance under the Industry Skills Fund;
- Supporting remote job seekers to work in real jobs through reforms to the Remote Jobs and Communities Program.

In the remote Kimberley Region of Western Australia Regional Development planning data reveals that to have equity in employment between Non Indigenous residents and Indigenous residents requires the creation of 19,000 new positions. Which is a challenge.

Alternative CDP approaches like the APONT model, which was developed in collaboration with West Kimberley CDP providers and importantly Aboriginal organisations that are aboriginal community controlled and have a long term program delivery history working with their people and communities in Northern Australia, is more likely to deliver the outcomes sought for CDP in Remote Northern Australia.

Restructuring of approach to Indigenous Affairs, in Remote Australia, which requires Government and the Indigenous community, to co design an approach to rebuilding local Aboriginal community or language groups sustainability both socially and economically.

Focus and effort needs to be in financing development opportunities. The lack of Indigenous investment capital to pursue or undertake economic opportunities from which to build economic capacity, create employment opportunities and develop economic independence is an aspirational consideration, given that decades of joblessness and State and Local Government exclusion policies has created welfare dependency.

The term asset rich, cash poor translates that even when opportunity arises, communities and Native Title bodies are unable to realize their development agenda due to lack of capital.

h. Any other related matters.

An anomaly in the CDP program is that the township of Broome located in the Kimberley Western Australia, is classified as Non remote and is unable to participate in CDP program despite the township having a significant Aboriginal population.

The Broome non remote classification is perplexing, given that large Centre's like Geraldton outer suburbs and Kalgoorlie are classified as remote. The mining epicenter of the country, the Pilbara i.e. Port Hedland and Karratha are classified remote and Broome a small town with a seasonal industry of Tourism is classed as Non remote.

Martin Sibosado
West Kimberley Empowered Communities Advisor
Aarnja Ltd.