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Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

Response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry into Indigenous employment.

As a Youth Specialist Job Network provider in the South West of WA, Community First Inc / Job futures has achieved a high level of employment outcomes for Indigenous clients aged 15 to 24 years. Over 20% of clients placed into employment for more than 13 weeks. Average for all job networks agencies in the area is 6% with one agency achieving less than 2%.

This has been achieved, firstly through development of good working relationships with local organizations. We work closely with agencies such as Centrelink (Indigenous services), CDEP coordinators, high schools, Group training companies, community groups and government departments.

These organizations are aware of our services and achievements in placing Indigenous clients into ongoing employment and/or training. They readily refer jobseekers to us for assistance in these areas and we work together to maximize successful outcomes.

Our main aim is to assist our clients into long term employment with private sector employers, preferably in apprenticeship or traineeship positions. To this end our partnership arrangements with the local group training company and certain Industry organizations has been invaluable.

Secondly from the Indigenous jobseeker's perspective we develop relationships with individuals and work cooperatively with them to determine their needs and aspirations. Once this is established we work together to provide appropriate training, employment assistance and ongoing post-placement mentoring.

Jobseekers are provided with a wide range assistance depending on individual needs including careers advice and counseling, interview & work clothing, transport assistance, vocational training and essential tools and equipment.

A work experience program where jobseekers can 'try out' certain occupations to see whether they like that type of work has also proven popular.

Program assistance is provided to employers through the job network jobseeker account funding and the Indigenous wage subsidy. These have proven highly successful and are used in tandem, where appropriate, with the federal government's New Apprenticeship incentives.

The participation of young people in CDEP restricts the numbers seeking employment and is of some concern, particularly in a buoyant labour market such as ours. Many participants enter straight from school and become comfortable in CDEP. They are then reluctant to engage in open employment.

There appears to be no motivation for them to 'move on' which only encourages them to remain sidelined from mainstream employment and the wider community. We are currently working with the coordinating organization to implement strategies to improve the transition to mainstream employment.

With significant skill shortages in many occupations in the local area it would seem appropriate to somehow restrict the numbers and/or the amount of time that individuals who are capable of private sector employment can spend in CDEP.

Indigenous youth have shown that they can make a significant contribution within the local labour market. They only need the opportunity and a bit of encouragement and support to make a successful transition into the workforce.

Peter Hunt

Operational Manager – Job Futures Bunbury WA

32 Wellington Street Bunbury WA 6230

Tel 08 9791 9022

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