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The Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**RE: Regional Skills Relocation Inquiry**

Thank you for your letter dated 25 February 2010, to the Hon Paul Henderson MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, seeking input into the inquiry into regional skills relocation. Your letter was forwarded, through the Minister for Business and Employment, for a departmental response.

Although the Northern Territory currently has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Australia, it does have a significant issue with high numbers of unemployed job seekers in the lower skill sectors, particularly in regional and remote areas where there are currently only a limited number of employment opportunities.

Research and anecdotal evidence from remote communities and towns, where there is a low level of workplace participation, point to the need for business and economic development at a local level, which would lead to more local employment opportunities, rather than relocating residents to other areas experiencing labour shortages. Indigenous people have a strong cultural attachment to their own country.

The Northern Territory is currently working together with Australian Government agencies, to raise the skill levels of jobseekers to better equip them towards gaining employment within the identified skilled occupation shortage areas.

There are a number of challenges the Northern Territory experiences when attracting labour from interstate. They include:

- a) the cost of relocation
- b) housing availability and affordability
- c) remoteness and cross cultural issues
- d) competing to attract skilled workers in the context of a generally tight labour market.

I note from the record of the first public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee meeting, held on 11 March 2010, that some of these issues have already been raised with the committee.

Unfortunately the Northern Territory is unable to prepare a formal submission in the time available.

I understand that further public consultations are proposed and I would appreciate the opportunity to be kept informed of the outcomes in this inquiry as it progresses

Yours sincerely

KIM JENKINSON  
Executive Director, Employment

9 April 2010