



FAIR WORK AND STRONG COMMUNITIES:

Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT Proposal for a Remote Development and Employment Scheme

All Australians expect to be treated with respect and to receive a fair wage for work. But the Australian Government is denying these basic rights to people in remote communities through its remote Work for the Dole program – the ‘Community Development Programme’.

Around 84 per cent of those subject to this program are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Most people in remote communities have to do **more work** than people in non-remote non-Indigenous majority areas for the **same** basic social security payment. In some cases, up to 760 hours more per year. There is less flexibility and people are paid far below the national minimum wage. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also being penalised more because of the onerous compliance conditions.

In many cases, people are receiving a basic social security payment for work they should be employed to do. The Government’s program is strangling genuine job opportunities in remote communities.

The Government’s remote Work for the Dole program is racially discriminatory and must be abandoned. Better outcomes will be achieved if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are given the opportunity to determine their own priorities and gain greater control over their own lives.

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A FAIR WAGE FOR WORK

There is an opportunity for the Australian Government to **meaningfully partner** with remote communities, rather than impose a ‘one size fits all’ model from Canberra.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote communities **want to take up the reins** and drive job creation and community development initiatives.

Remote communities need a program that sees people **employed** to work on projects the community needs. And to do so with decent pay and conditions, and the right to earn more for extra effort. The current program keeps people in the welfare system and excessive penalties see people just disengage. It provides no reward for effort and does not address the need to support people into the workforce.

Remote communities need a program that **encourages school leavers** to move straight into employment or training. Not one that leaves young people trapped in a welfare cycle or disengaged.

Tailored community-led approaches are needed that reflect the diverse cultural, economic and social aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the realities of the remote job market.

A FAIR AND POSITIVE SCHEME FOR WAGED WORK AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Five Aboriginal organisations in the Northern Territory, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remote service providers, have developed a new, fair and positive model for job creation and community building – the Remote Development and Employment Scheme.

The Scheme will see people placed into part time work with award wages and conditions. People will be protected by the workplace rights so many Australians take for granted. It would reduce the role that the welfare system plays in peoples' lives. It will see more time and money spent creating new opportunities for jobs, enterprise and community development and less on pointless administration.

The Scheme is a place-based and community-driven model. It will establish long-term collaboration across governments, employers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to increase opportunities in remote communities. Critically, the Scheme provides incentives to encourage people into work, training and other activities, rather than punishing people already struggling to comply.

Key features of the Remote Development and Employment Scheme:

- Establish a wages fund to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other local organisations to create 10,500 part time jobs on award wages and conditions, working on services and projects important to their communities, with the ability to 'top up' these wages from other funds when extra work is done.
- Create 1,500 paid work experience and training places for young people, supported by locally driven youth development strategies.
- Remove the discriminatory requirement for people in remote communities who remain on social security payments to work more hours than people in non-remote areas.
- Create Remote Job Centres, with local governance bodies, focused on long term support to help people get into work, stay in work, and progress into better jobs based on their skills and aspirations.
- Retain activity obligations for people who can work and receive social security but aren't in a job. Obligations will be based on their capabilities and the needs and views of communities.
- Support people with disabilities and family responsibilities to meet their goals and contribute to their communities in a manner appropriate to their capabilities and aspirations.
- Maintain and improve access to government services in remote communities, including Centrelink, and help people with disabilities access the right payment through the support of Remote Job Centres.
- Ensure the Scheme is managed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, through shared learning and evidence, by establishing an independent body with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led board.

A MODEL WITH BROAD COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Remote Development and Employment Scheme has been developed by the Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT after extensive meetings with remote Community Development Program providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. The following organisations have endorsed the Scheme:

- Australian Council of Social Services
- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
- Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation
- Bynoe Community Advancement Co-operative Society Limited
- Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service
- Central Desert Regional Council
- Central Land Council
- Centre for Appropriate Technology
- East Arnhem Regional Council
- First Peoples Disability Network (Australia)
- Gulf Savannah NT Association
- Human Rights Law Centre
- Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation
- Jobs Australia
- Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Kalano Community Association
- Kullari Regional Communities Inc
- Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
- National Social Security Rights Network
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
- Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation
- North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency
- Northern Land Council
- Northern Territory Council of Social Services
- Oak Valley Aboriginal Corporation and Maralinga Tjaruta Inc
- Scotdesco Aboriginal Corporation
- Tangentyere Council Incorporated
- Thamarrurr Development Corporation Limited
- Tiwi Land Council
- Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board
- West Arnhem Regional Council

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

An alliance of the CLC, NLC, CAALAS, NAAJA and AMSANT