

Aboriginal Peak Organisations, NT Proposed Remote Development and Employment Scheme

PAID EMPLOYMENT AT AWARD WAGES.

A wages fund (the Remote Jobs Investment Fund) would enable 10,500 new jobs to be created for CDP Participants (about 30% caseload). These would be real jobs delivering real jobs and services, mostly in Indigenous organisations, including with providers. Standard working week would be 20 hours. Local communities could vary this to suit their needs, although full time jobs could not normally be created from the funding. Employers would be encouraged to 'top up' through other funding (like commercial fees). There would be a training account. Jobs would be for up to five years, and the people in these jobs would be encouraged to take up other jobs if they arise. Staged implementation process.

REMOTE JOB CENTRES.

Existing CDP providers replaced with Remote Job Centres. Wherever possible, these would be Indigenous organisations. Their job would be to work with local participants, employers, communities and with governments to increase the proportion of people in the region who are (1) in employment (2) earning some income or (3) participating to the extent of their ability. They would have local governance bodies and community endorsed plans. These would be long term objectives measured over time, and would be part of a wider impact framework which includes community objectives. They would offer long term case management for people to get into work, to stay in work, and to progress into better jobs, freeing up other positions for new entrants. Remote Job Centres would be free to determine the best strategies to help people maximise their opportunities.

PEOPLE WITH BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT.

Remote Jobs Centres would work with people to help them get the right assessment and to get onto the right payment. While this is happening, or where the Remote Job Centre considers that someone has no immediate capacity to benefit from work-related activity, they will have the ability to place the person into a 'personal development stream' which has minimal obligations, but still gets support. They can still volunteer for activities or employment. CDP providers will be able to recommend that some exit the program if they want to leave and are not benefiting.

OBLIGATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS.

Those in work will have the normal obligations of any worker - including to attend and to do what is required. Those who have the capacity to work, but don't have a job would have obligations attached to their income support. The basic principle would be that these are no more onerous than those of other income support recipients (currently around 650 hours per year) and would have the same basic rights and penalties under the law. Within this overall framework, it would be for local communities to decide what should be included, how hours should be arranged and what approach should be taken to participation failures. Remote Job Centres would have discretion to engage people in the way that meets community needs and aspirations.

YOUTH.

In addition to local youth engagement strategies, there would be a national pool of around 1500 paid work experience and training positions created, similar to the former Green Corps, but not limited to environmental work. These would involve 6-9 months training and work, enabling young people to get an experience of employment after leaving school.

NEW BODY TO MANAGE THE PROGRAM.

An independent body would manage the program. This would have an Indigenous led Board. Accountability for long term results would be shared and the body would work in partnership with providers. Regional decision making structures (where they exist) would have a critical role to play. Changes to policy would be made in order to improve employment and wellbeing, and on the basis of consultation and evidence.

Proposed Development and Employment scheme at a glance

Figure 1: Governance and delivery arrangements

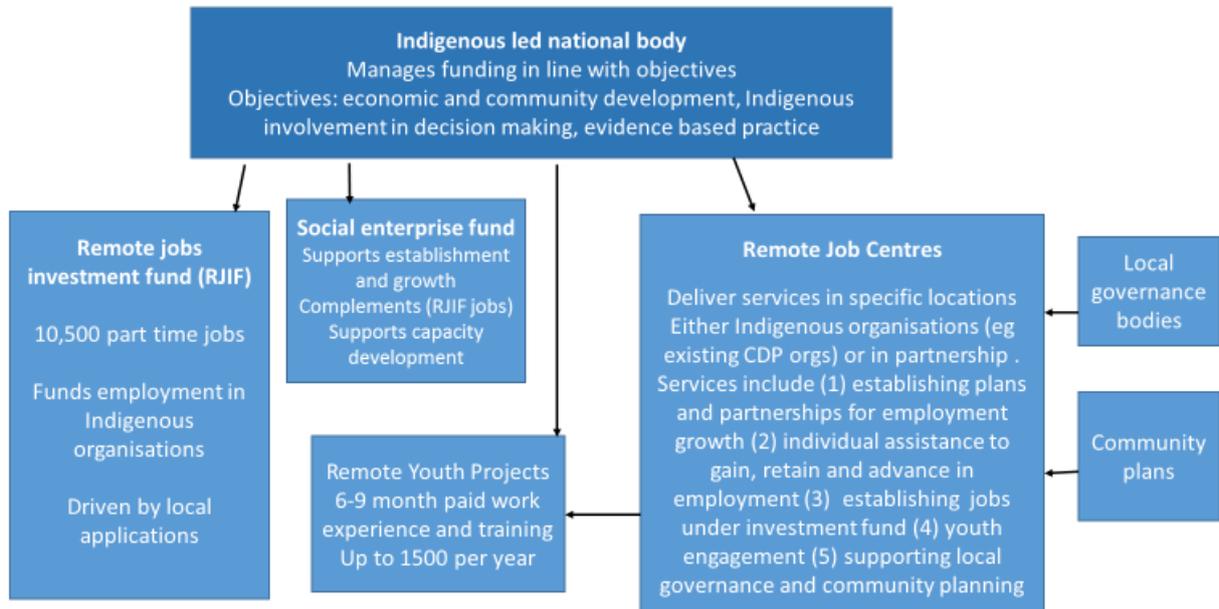
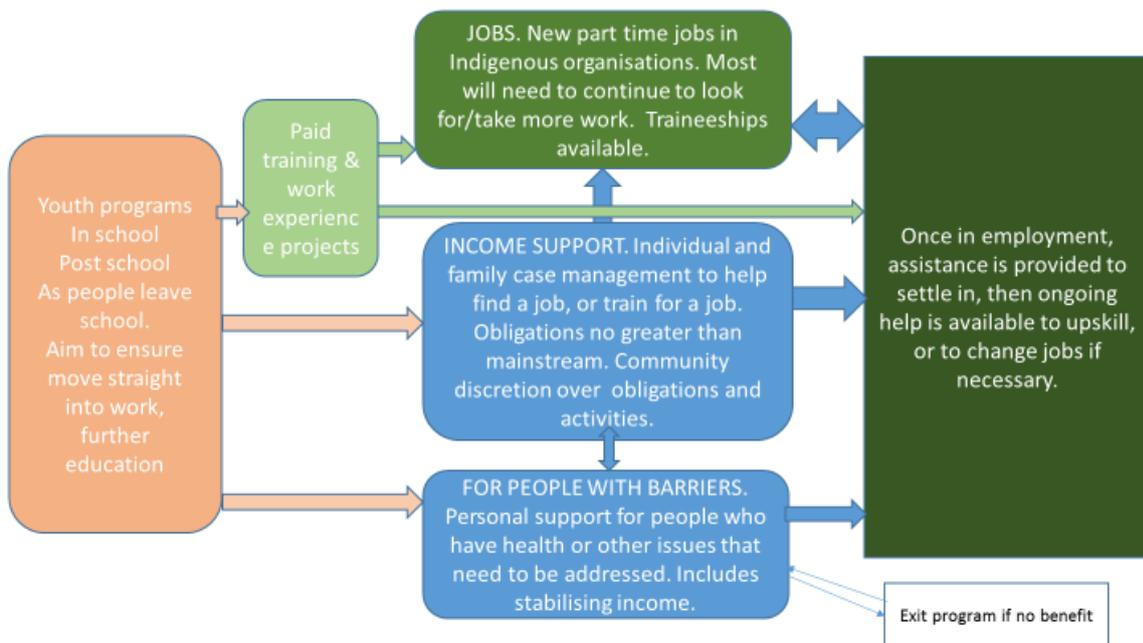


Figure 2: Services and opportunities provided for people under the scheme



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHAT IS APONT AND WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS PROPOSAL?

Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory (APO NT) is an alliance comprising the Central Land Council, Northern Land Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the NT. In December 2016 APONT held a forum of Indigenous organisations, including providers, to discuss CDP. Since then it has been gathering input and consulting with providers, Indigenous organisations, employment experts and others.

ARE YOU SERIOUS? NOT MORE CHANGE!

In the first 18 months of CDP, nearly 250,000 penalties were applied to CDP recipients – more than were applied to jobactive participants, even though that program has more than 20 times the caseload. Within CDP, Indigenous people are penalised more often and get fewer job outcomes. CDP is not addressing lack of job opportunity. Providers are doing what they can, but they are struggling against a program that is top-down, compliance focussed and complex. Another 5 years (and \$1.3billion) of the same thing is not good enough, and not fair on those many people in remote communities who want the chance to earn an income.

WHAT IS THE PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL?

A detailed funding model has not been proposed, however for Remote Job Centres, APO NT is arguing for a simple funding model (for example an annual ‘per participant’ amount) plus supplementary payments to recognise areas with higher cost structures. Once the program is bedded down there may be the opportunity for ‘success payments’ for those with demonstrated impact. The Remote Jobs Investment Fund would provide wages and on costs to the organisation that employs participants (at least 25% including super), and access to a training account.

HOW WILL THE CHANGE BE MANAGED?

In the short-term APO NT proposes reducing the annual Work for the Dole hourly requirement so that it is broadly in line with the annual requirement of other unemployed people, allowing providers to arrange the hours of participation in a way that suits, and removing the financial disincentive for providers to use their discretion in cases of non-compliance. The rest of the implementation would be managed through a process of consultation and negotiation, led by a body whose job includes community involvement. APO NT proposes the rollout of the new 10,500 jobs be gradual, but also start as soon as possible to show people that there are new opportunities coming.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT RED TAPE?

APO NT proposes that the whole model move to a longer-term, community development and case management model, and away from compliance. In this scenario, Job Plans would be much simpler and only need be very formal if compliance action is being considered. Daily monitoring and reporting would not be necessary in most cases and would no longer drive performance reporting or funding.

WHAT WILL DHS' ROLE BE?

DHS would retain their current role. However, the need to interact with them over penalties issues would be reduced: about 30% of current participants will be in work; some people will be in ‘personal support’; and while the rest will have activity requirements, their flexibility should mean that penalties are applied much less frequently. On the other hand, Remote Job Centres would have a more active role in supporting participants to get onto the right payments, for example by helping them get medical evidence. APO NT will urge the Commonwealth to conduct an end to end review of the adequacy of DHS services in remote areas so that all people, whether they are in CDP or not, can access the safety net.

TO FIND OUT MORE AND PROVIDE YOUR SUPPORT

The full proposal is available from (08) 8944 6672 or via email Brionee.noonan@amsant.org.au. APO NT is collecting endorsements from a wide range of organisations – please email to confirm your support.