

Clarification on the current status of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)

Under the Intervention there have been two waves of attack on CDEP which has meant: "thousands of waged jobs have been lost and Aboriginal organisations have been crippled as Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) close down" (as outlined in our statement).

Firstly, the Howard government legislated to abolish ALL CDEPs in the Northern Territory as part of the Intervention in 2007. The victory of the ALP federally not long after the Intervention began meant that this was not carried out as comprehensively as Howard planned. Only some CDEPs were closed down in this period. When Labor took office they put a moratorium on the closure of CDEPs and actually restored a number of CDEPs to full operation. Nevertheless, in many cases the damage was done in terms of jobs lost and capacity destroyed.

Secondly, from July 2009 Labor's 'reformed' CDEP scheme has been in operation. All 'regional' CDEPs (so for example Cairns, Wollongong) were completely shut. In remote areas (and all of the NT is considered 'remote') the program was rationalised - only one CDEP provider was selected from a competitive tender process for each geographical area. So for example in Alice Springs rather than there being numerous CDEPs operating - Tangentyere, Inkerreke, the Arrente Council etc - there is now only one - Tangentyere.

In MOST remote areas it is not Aboriginal organisations that run CDEP now it is the new 'Supershires' or private 'training' firms such as Community Enterprises Australia.

Also, as outlined in the statement, people who began on the scheme after July 2009 no longer receive wages. They are paid through Centrelink. In the NT, this means that their payments are quarantined onto the BasicsCard. There are some workers left on the old scheme, those who have managed to keep an 'unbroken relationship' with CDEP since before the 'reform' process started. However, these numbers are declining dramatically and in July 2011 all these positions will stop. All CDEP participants will be paid through Centrelink from this time.

This process of reform has been incredibly destructive both in terms of jobs lost and the introduction of very exploitative conditions for those who are on the new CDEP scheme.