

Thursday, 24 January 2019

Scullion shifts deck chairs on CDP

Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion has announced superficial changes to the deeply flawed and racially discriminatory Community Development Program, which his office has previously described as ‘a resounding success’.

The minister claims that the changes will reduce the obscene rates of penalties being handed out to workers under the scheme, which have been shown to be highest in areas with a higher Indigenous population.

In the Milingimbi/Ramingining region of the Northern Territory, where the population is 99.8% Indigenous, the program distributed 15 penalties for each participant in 2017.

In the Western Tablelands of Queensland, where the population is 29.3% Indigenous, the program averaged 1.9 penalties per participant.

The CDP forces unemployed people in remote areas to work for free, sometimes for for-profit companies for 25 hours per week, without any basic workplace entitlements, the protection of OHS legislation, or federal worker’s compensation.

The ACTU does not believe that the proposed changes will do much to help CDP workers given the program is systemically flawed and no amount of tinkering will change that fact.

The ACTU calls on the Morrison Government to follow the lead of the ALP and the Greens and scrap the program.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Indigenous Officer Lara Watson:

“This program forces people to work for no pay, with no protection if they are injured, and none of the basic employment entitlements like superannuation and leave. That’s the central issue and these changes do not address it.

“This program has devastated communities, reduced employment opportunities and forced people into poverty and hunger.

“The Abbott/Turnbull/Morrison Government has an appalling record on Indigenous affairs but this program stands alone as an example of outright systemic racism.”

“The First Nations Workers Alliance has shown that when workers pull together they can win, and we look forward to a new government working with communities to bring in a new approach to creating jobs in remote communities.”

ENDS

Media contact: Peter Green 0400 764 200, ACTU Media: 03 9664 7315

<http://www.actu.org.au/actu-media/media-releases>