

Thursday 19 March 2015

Abbott Government widens the gap in Indigenous employment

Today is National Close the Gap Day – yet the employment gap for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is widening.

Unions warn the Abbott Government's decision to abolish the Community Develop Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme will widen the job gap for Indigenous Australians even further.

The program provides income to Indigenous people for working on local community projects in mostly remote areas instead of solely relying on welfare.

The Abbott Government will close the scheme in June 2015 and move participants onto welfare.

This short sighted move will slash the incomes of Indigenous Australians and impact Indigenous communities.

Australian Unions believe fulfilling jobs and sustainable economic development in Indigenous communities is essential to close the gap and improve the lives of Indigenous Australians.

Employment and the economic independence it achieves also play a vital role in mental health and well-being.

Key facts:

- 2,399 Indigenous Australians will be moved off the CDEP program and onto welfare with the majority in Western Australia and Northern Territory
- The Abbott Government cut \$534 million in budget cuts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, including more than \$160 million cut from Indigenous health programs

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“If the Abbott Government is concerned about closing the gap for Indigenous Australians, why are they kicking people off work which benefits their community?”

“The Coalition Government slashed \$534 million from Indigenous programs in last year's budget – so the lack of progress in closing the gap is hardly surprising.

“Having fulfilling work opportunities are a vital part of closing the gap for Indigenous health outcomes – not Work for the Dole schemes that do not provide a pathway to on-going jobs.

“Employment initiatives must be based on real consultation, self-determination and an understanding of the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

“The CDEP scheme gave many Indigenous participants an opportunity to develop skills, contribute to their community and become economically independent.

“Indigenous Australians must be consulted and involved in decision making rather than the paternalistic approach of the Abbott Government.”

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