ICV Submission to Discussion Paper – Remote Employment and Participation

ICV is pleased to be able to offer its insights into the proposed changes to the Community Development Programme (CDP). It is encouraging to see the Minister's intention to look at a more tailored solution for communities and transition the funding to local Indigenous community organisations, who in our view, are best placed to obtain the greatest impact from the delivery of these services.

The critical issue to be considered in the implementation of a new model is not focused on the implementation, but rather the methodology and measures of the program. Any changes should be grounded in the understanding that:

In February 2016, the Close the Gap Campaign (the Campaign) welcomed the Prime Minister's words at his first Closing the Gap report to Parliament where he said ***'we have to stay the course on key policy priorities'*** and that it is time for governments to ***'do things with Aboriginal people, not do things to'*** Aboriginal people. In his speech, the Prime Minister said:

"I will honour that commitment not by delivering to Indigenous Australians, but by working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and their communities across Australia…"

The new arrangements should include a process to ensure that non-Indigenous providers funded under the CDP program are able to build and maintain effective community relationships through the life of the agreement, and to ensure that all funding of non-Indigenous/ 'non community organisations' are funded only to transition the required skills to a community run organisation via a transitional funding arrangement.

The government has a role to play in job creation in remote communities through economic development, and the support of broader community initiatives. Consideration must be given to the community capacity building more holistically, rather than the current 'siloed' approach.

For example, the government should consider how The Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) regional offices could coordinate and network the broad variety of programs, be they CDP or other, such as IAS funded projects/organisations, to co-design 'community capacity development programs' that have longer term sustainable outcomes for community and individuals.

Tailored measurement, KPIs and activities

When considering both the successes and subsequent issues of previous iterations of this program, a critical failing of the program to date (particularly in remote and very remote communities) has been its inability to measure the success of projects/programs, due to the 'one size fits all' approach to program measurement.

Indigenous community volunteers

Measures should be created to understand the impact of community participation, and the meaning of 'tangible and sustainable outcomes' within the indigenous context.

This year ICV formalised our approach to emphasising the voice of communities in the way we capture our data. We have now developed a monitoring and database system that:

• Allows communities to choose their own indicators of success which monitor short-term outcomes and their long-term dream.

• Generates a community's own program logic that describes the successful outcome/s they desire, the strengths and assets they have to work with and the planned solution.

• Captures an aggregate picture of the impact trends in ICV's community development activities across all regions using quantitative data. This is based on a collation of indicators chosen by communities.

When communities are able to input on the policy and programs implemented on their behalf the outcomes have a higher rate of success.

Community Development and Participation does not always translate to employment outcomes, and the measures need to incorporate the flexibility to reflect this. Currently CDP reflects success from a purely 'western context', i.e.: employment outcomes/ accredited training outcomes equal success.

Social and emotional wellbeing, and the inclusion of land and culture is widely considered to be a critical component in sustainable health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who consider health to be holistic.

The belief that physical health is affected by the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of both individuals and the broader community must be taken into account when delivering all services. Communities should be encouraged to present 'holistic' longer term strategies to address the 'disadvantage'. i.e. if a person is mentally strong, they are more likely to address physical ailments, or actively participate in the workforce.

Whist employment or greater qualifications should be seen as a positive result of such engagement, greater consideration should be given to the cultural motivations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples; community is the foremost of all values, and work is often motivated by group need, not individual success.

If CDP programs are run to the benefit of community, government or the 'transitional' funded CDP providers must work with community Leaders, individual measures for remote and outer regional communities should be considered, within the broader context of community success.

By considering holistic 'whole of community' approaches, i.e.: employment, health and education projects considered together and realistic measures set based on current capacity, success of the programs is highly likely.



For example; ***in some cases, increased engagement in community, a reduction in engagement with the justice system, or an increase in volunteering in the community context, may be a better measure of improvement of community capacity than an increase in employment rates.***

Building capability

A government investment in the skills required to both negotiate and report to government on the success of programs is needed. Communities will then be further empowered to identify 'projects' that benefit the people as a whole.

Many of the engagements ICV has had with CDP funded providers has shown a lack of communication with the communities on the funds available to develop community based projects, or insufficient skills in the project planning to implement these programs.

This has resulted in both an absence of community engagement and/or ineffective use of the funding to facilitate a greater impact on the community, or meaningful outcomes for the participants involved. The Minister's intention to place the delivery in the hands of communities will be integral to their success.

Through experience, ICV has learned what works, and what doesn't. Communities prioritise and decide on the work to be done. Working only at invitation, where communities design and own the activities, ICV facilitates empowerment, genuine buy in and long term results.

Regardless of the type of project chosen by community, the majority of ICV activities have a strong leadership and governance component. ICV makes quality investments into meaningful engagement with communities. Understanding and acquiring local knowledge and designing and implementing suitable, community requested projects and programs starts from this strong, relational base.

Existing ICV governance activities include support for strengthening Board and management capabilities, developing policies, procedures and accounting systems, book keeping, feasibility studies and marketing and profile development.

ICV would be happy to work with government to develop new initiatives and ensure the success of the new delivery model.

- ICV's approach ensures change is driven by the people who are living with the issue and the solution comes from their own lived experience.
- Capability development is key to ICV's approach. ICV supported projects facilitate meaningful and relevant learning. ICV states, "We don't build the house, we work with communities to learn how to build it, they then build it themselves."
- Through the problem solving process and designing the work, communities gain an understanding of what they are capable of, what existing assets they can tap into in their region and where they need additional support and learning. Through implementing and delivering the work, people are proud of what they've achieved and want to show it off.
- Because of the ownership within the community there is increased transparency and accountability around decision making and governance of work.