Appendix B

Remote Employment and Participation Responses

Youth Services worker (former CDP provider employee), Amata, SA

Her insights into the current CDP and former CDEP informed the following comments.

The current CDP program is staffed by outsiders – some might be Aboriginal – but not local. They come from New South Wales, Queensland and other places. They don't know our communities, our language, our ways of supporting each other. They admit to being here for the money, nothing else.

A safe and trusting environment is essential and this is not engendered when outsiders with no previous remote experience fly in and fly out each week or fortnight and often stay in the job for a year or two at best.

Participants are often reluctant to explain the difficulties at home that may be inhibiting their participation in CDP. Flexibility isn't offered as the provider doesn't understand that problems are mounting. Rather than trying to explain their issues and request time off, participants may simply not attend and therefore have payments suspended.

Before CDP was introduced, we had CDEP. CDEP was managed by a *Piranpa* man. He spent most of his time in the office attending to paperwork. The supervisors were local, trusted to run the program and participants were taught 'on the job', and they were also trusted to operate equipment use tools properly.

Food security issues were acknowledged in a respectful manner. Breakfast or at least a cuppa was available and when lunch was provided many participants would stay the whole day, participating for much more than the required hours. "Top up" was a good way to encourage participants and reward the extra work.

There are 4 main areas that need to be improved to have more local people get real jobs.

1. **Meaningful Educational in a senior school environment**

Young people don't see many local people in jobs in the community and therefore disengage from the education at an early age. Many young men leave school following participation in men's ceremony – as young as 14 or 15.

Recommendation:

Deliver foundation skills in Literacy and Numeracy in a respectful education setting with Anangu support workers, separately for young men and women. Students can learn practical applications and skills development, removing the 'shame' in needing to go back to basics.

2. **Work Experience with real mentoring**

This can start at school –Jarrod James and the support from Remote Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC) is a great example. He worked with RASAC part time while attending school and completed year 12. He is now in a senior role, mentoring others in the workplace.

Work experience can also form part of a job seeker's participation requirements – gaining familiarity with the environment and roles in a potential workplace.

Recommendation:

Actively recruit or train up Anangu supervisors as they make new workers and work experience participants more comfortable and therefore more likely to confidently transition to work. often a 'Outsiders' often don't trust locals in the workplace and this can be seen and felt in their body language.

3. **Training for real jobs**

In remote communities it is difficult to get the 10-12 people into particular courses that providers say are needed to make the course viable financially. Therefore, the one or two who really want a job that requires some level of training or qualification such as a white card, an ochre card or first aid training miss out or lose the enthusiasm with waits of more than 3 months for training to be offered locally or travel to large centres such as Alice Springs, up to 1000 km away, at considerable expense.

Recommendation:

Conduct an audit of jobs and the training requirements so that relevant training is provided on a regular basis.

Regular training to be offered for First Aid, Driver's Licence, Community Services, Business Administration, Food handling etc, White card, etc so people have the qualifications when jobs in the community become available.

4. **Clear Information about Rights and Responsibilities**

Some CDP providers are selective about the information given to participants about:

- Entitlements such as provision of correct attire to comply with WHS
- The information shared with Centrelink that then goes on the participant's file in DSS (DHS?)
- What happens if they miss appointments
- How to seek independent advice or assistance eg: Community Legal Services or the Commonwealth Ombudsman

Recommendation:

Acknowledge that additional resources are required to support participants in remote communities many of whom are not confident or fluent English speakers. The resources are personnel – especially interpreters, both via a pool of trained local people and a readily accessible community telephone service; and appropriate infrastructure - including telephones, computers and faxes for communities where there is no mobile coverage, when the internet drops out or computers are down - to allow for clear two-way communication.

Interview with community elder, Blackstone WA

General observations about the current CDP

People don't have the feeling to work when they've been cut off – they just go further down.

More information is needed in communities – very simple English or in language so elders can read the information and explain it to young people who aren't able to read it themselves.

People aren't sure about their responsibilities. Any new program needs to be explained properly and clearly.

8 weeks penalty is too much – it doesn't empower communities

Good coordinators are needed! And everyone should know who they are and what their job really is.

Have elders (mentors) in workplaces to help / encourage young workers.

Specific comments about the options:

Option 1

The new program should be 16 hours and top up after that.

Pressure on those who don't have participation requirements: *In communities where there aren't many grandparents, young men and women look after themselves better. They have to.*

Option 2

No immediate penalties!

"it would hurt my spirit to be cut off immediately. It doesn't make me feel good and wanting to go back to work"

Option 3

Explore more options that fit with community life:

We need to have a list of places such as Art centres, Workshops, Playgroups, School, Landcare

where people can do their activities.

Funding is needed for those workplaces for materials and equipment for participants

When people are cut off the money should be put in a community fund – people will see their money stay in the community for everyone.

Land management activities could be 25 hours – others less.

Flexibility so people don't have to the same number of hours each week – lots one week and only a few the next if they have to go to town for anything.

Wages topped up for people doing more than 16 hours

Transcript of part of the evidence provided by Tanya Luckey, (Imanpa, NT) and Jamie Nyaningu, (Pukatja, SA) at the Alice Springs CDP Senate Inquiry Hearing – describing the confusion, mental health issues and family stress caused by the current system

Ms Luckey: *My personal story: I've got a young cousin, a double orphan who lost his mum and dad, not at the same time but different times. Because of who I am—I've got a lot of feelings for people—I took this young fella in and was his payment nominee until I organised his key card and everything. After that, I encouraged him to become independent, talked to him about going on youth allowance and all that. Because at the time I wanted him to further his education, so I put him on Abstudy first, enrolled him in school, and we did all that. After a while, he finished his schooling and decided to go on youth allowance, and moved out of home and wanted to go and explore the world. So I said, 'Yes, go for it, you're a young fella, do it.' Anyway, after a while, he rang me up, kept ringing me up: 'Something's wrong with my payment.' So I went online to look at it: 'You've been suspended; you haven't attended your appointment.' I explained all that to him. He said, 'What are you on about?' So I explained what he has to do. Anyway, he was in another community at the time.*

I spoke to the other Centrelink agent and I said: 'Look, you need to help him and take him in the right direction. You must send him in the right direction so that he can go and sort his thing out.' Anyway, he went and got it all sorted out. After a while, he didn't want to be there, so he was travelling around. Eventually, his payment got suspended for eight weeks. This young fella put a lot of pressure on me and I, of course, I had to wait. This young fella, I think, he went and opened as many doors as he could, until he couldn't open any more doors, so at the end of the day I had to step in. He needed to eat, he needed to survive, so as a family member we gave him support for food. But I told him: 'You need to get back to me. I need to help you.' He was in Alice Springs then. He said: 'Mum, I'm stuck in town. I don't know where to go, it's really getting to me now. I haven't eaten. Other people don't want to support me. I'm really at the end, where I think I want to just finish it all. I'm over it.' I said: 'Hang on, hang on. You wait there for me, I'm coming in.'

So I came in and I saw him and said: 'Who is your job network provider? We need to go and see them people, because they're the people that you had your appointments with.' So we went there straightaway and tried to sort it all out. It took us half a day of being there. Straight after that, I took him, because they didn't want to talk to me. I just said: 'Look, this young fella, he's going to end up doing something if he's got to walk out of here without anybody doing anything about his payment.' I said: 'Someone needs to do something about it today.' After that, they fixed it up there and then I took him back to Centrelink. I don't want him just wandering round. He had no car; he was lucky I had a car. This young fella, he's got no car, no family, no support; he didn't know where to start, but he had my support. I went and helped him, 'Okay, we're going to start from here first,' and then we went. As soon as he got his payment, you should have seen him, he was so happy. I said, 'Next time, you've got to be really careful with your appointments, now that you know.' I said, 'You need to go back home and start an activity or something.' He said, 'I don't want to be back there. I don't like to do the activities they are doing. It's not me. I do not want to do that. I want to do something that's going to build my skills up.' So I said, 'What are your skills?' And then he started talking to me. I said: 'This is something that you need to go back and talk about when you go for your appointments—talk to them about what you want, for you, and not what they want you to do. It's what you want them to help you with.'

Senator McCARTHY: *Thank you, Tanya. Jamie?*

Mr Nyaningu: '*I've got the same problem with my family. I saw a car every time coming to my area, looking at that house. I walked over and talked with those people: 'Who are you looking for?' 'One of*

your sisters.' 'Something wrong?' 'Look at this bill—the rent.' That house belongs to Housing in South Australia. She couldn't pay rent because Centrelink cut her off for four weeks, or four months maybe. And the bill was going up and going up. But luckily I saw my young brother. I said, 'Hey—can you help your sister? Here is the bill for our family.' Then we went down to Aboriginal SA to sign up. Now he covered the bill—what my sister was owing.

That is the problem, you know. If Centrelink people—they should really look after him, because they are paying the rent, power and water. You can't cut it off for four months—four weeks, maybe. What about the kids?

***Mr Nyaningu:** then spoke in language—*

Kids crying; kids needing new clothes. They want to buy a new washing machine. But no good. Centrelink pay must be a little bit—not good wages. That might be the problem. Problem is both ways. People sitting on no pay. I don't know why they're doing this one.'

The full transcript is available on the Senate Inquiry website