COMMONWEALTH TO BLAME FOR 500 LOST JOBS
Willem Westra van Holthe MLA
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More than 500 Aboriginal workers in CDEP schemes across the Northern Territory will be unemployed at the end of the month unless the Commonwealth Government reverses a decision to slash funding to its work transition program.

Shadow Local Government Minister, Willem Westra van Holthe, said a two year interim funding arrangement announced by the Commonwealth when the scheme was introduced will expire at the end of the financial year.

The CDEP-to-work program funded local governments in the Northern Territory to assist in the transition of CDEP workers to real jobs.

During Council of Territory Co-Operation hearings in Darwin today, Local Government Association representatives said the Commonwealth had declined to continue funding the program.

“While the Territory Government is trying to keep some workers in the scheme, many are destined to lose their jobs,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“The abandonment of the program suggests the Commonwealth is half-hearted when it comes to Closing the Gap in Indigenous communities.

“A long term commitment to programs of this type is needed to ready Indigenous people for the workforce.

“Shires are the major employer of Indigenous people in remote communities, but their capacity to create jobs is undermined by an inability to raise own-source revenue through rates.

“Under Territory Labor, local shires have not only been rail-roaded into amalgamations without adequate consultation and preparation, but they have also been chronically under-funded.

“This, combined with Territory and Commonwealth Government indifference, means hundreds of Indigenous men and women who are willing and able to work will soon be unemployed.

“It is appalling that the Commonwealth has decided to slash this necessary and worthwhile program at a time when Aboriginal people are increasingly trying to participate in the workforce.”

Further comment: Willem Westra van Holthe 0414 778 430