Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson, says the Prime Minister’s words about closing the gap are fine words but they are not backed up by any understanding of what real change is needed if change is to happen.

He says that the Federal Government lives in cuckoo land when it says it will replace the CDEP programme and replace it with real jobs. The reality is that there are no so-called real jobs in many remote communities, so now most people will go back to welfare.

Gerry says the statement in Parliament yesterday by the PM that every person (meaning Aboriginal person) should ‘take a job when you can find one’ is laughable when you see the irony in that statement.

By saying that the PM admits there are not enough jobs but does not say anything about fixing the problem.

Gerry says that local councils should be given the welfare money topped up to make a reasonable wage and those councils given the responsibility and funding to provide jobs for those who want to work – no welfare for those who don’t.

He says why go to school if there are no jobs, why tell people to get off the grog if they have nothing to do and are bored, and why tell people to build their own homes if they have no jobs to pay for those homes?

Gerry says that until the Government as the guts to scrap welfare and replace it with jobs then nothing will change, not even the rhetoric.

Jobs are the key to closing the gap; welfare will continue to widen it.