CDEP Changes Could Leave Communities on Scrap Heap

The Commonwealth’s changes to the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) could put the Territory’s Indigenous communities on the scrap heap, Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Indigenous Affairs, Elliot McAdam, said today.

Mr McAdam has met with his State, Territory and Federal counterparts in Adelaide today and said the Territory Government remains opposed to the way in which the Commonwealth plans to abolish CDEP.

“The Federal Government’s plan to abolish CDEP in communities with less than 100 people will mean an 18% pay cut for the most financially disadvantaged people in Australia, living in areas with the highest cost of living and no labour market,” Mr McAdam said.

“Abolishing CDEP will also remove $20 million from remote community councils and resource centres which currently supply aged care and other critical services.

“The Federal Government is throwing Indigenous Territorians onto the scrap heap.

“We cannot forget that Aboriginal people themselves created CDEP to ensure that essential work was carried out by community members, and now the Federal Government plans to scrap the program without consultation or a clear plan for creating real replacement jobs.

"What is needed is a carefully managed strategic approach to developing employment opportunities in remote communities, and a commitment from the Commonwealth to negotiate with communities to ensure there will be real jobs and real wages."

Mr McAdam has also called on the Federal Government to release the detail of its raft of legislation to address child abuse.

"Legislation will be introduced in Federal Parliament as early as Tuesday, yet no details have been released on these important changes,” said Mr McAdam.

The Territory Government will send representatives to Canberra early next week when the legislation is introduced.

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