

Monday, 12 February 2018

## Turnbull Government realizes free labour force not technically 'employed'

Closing the Gap set the goal of halving the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous unemployment rates by 2018 in 2007.

In the tenth Closing the Gap report, released today, the Turnbull Government confirmed that this target will not be met.

In conceding this failure, the Government argued that the figures on Indigenous employment have been "complicated" by the fact that people who were working, and earning a wage, through previous programs are no longer classified as being employed because they are subject to the Abbott/Turnbull Government's racially discriminatory Community Development Program (CDP).

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Spokesperson Kara Keys:

"Workers subject to the CDP are forced to work 25 hours per week, often in manual labour positions, are not paid, receive no employment benefits or rights, have no access to OHS protections or workers compensation. CDP does not generate jobs, in fact, it displaces them.

"The introduction of a scheme which creates a pool of free Indigenous workers ready to be exploited by for-profit businesses, decimating employment opportunities in remote and regional communities has undoubtedly "complicated" Indigenous employment.

"It is obscene that a Government which has enacted a policy as brutal as CDP is now trying to cook the books and explain away the devastating effects of their own program.

"This program is devastating for tens of thousands of people in remote communities who are expected to slave away for no wages. All the hand wringing in the world will not change that.

"The CDP has had a disastrous impact on employment opportunities in remote and regional communities. The Turnbull Government is handing out free labour and wondering why employers don't seem interested in paying anyone a wage.

"This program is not about helping Indigenous people or empowering communities, it is about punishment and compliance. The rates of penalties handed out in this program far exceed all other welfare programs.

"If the Turnbull Government wants to get serious about closing the gap on Indigenous unemployment it needs to abandon this paternalistic, racist approach and invest in communities on an equal footing, Indigenous workers, like all other workers, should be entitled to decent work, respect and jobs which pay a wage. Until this happens, sadly, we should expect to see more of the same."

**ENDS**

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