

Thursday 23 March, 2017

Australian Unions welcome Senate Inquiry into racist CDP

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) welcomes the referral of an inquiry into the Turnbull Government's punitive Community Development Program (CDP) to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee.

This program imposes extremely onerous conditions on the overwhelmingly Indigenous population in remote communities just to receive basic support payments.

Participants in the program are required to participate in 25 hours of work per week – significantly more than the requirements for metropolitan work for the dole programs.

The program effectively provides free labour in remote communities where jobs are already scarce, replacing real, paying jobs with unpaid labour.

People who are unable to comply with the requirements of the scheme face extensive financial penalties and long periods of being cut off from support payments all together.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Indigenous Officer Kara Keys:

“We hope that this inquiry will shed light on this program, which is not only punitive and counter-productive but also clearly racially discriminatory.”

“The CDP is objectively a harsher program than anything which applies to welfare recipients in metropolitan areas, and it is no co-incidence that more than 80% of the people working under this program are Indigenous.”

“This program should not be tolerated but unfortunately the Government has been able to escape the condemnation it so richly deserves because this program affects some of the most marginalised people in our society.”

“The union movement stands with all workers and we have been campaigning against this program since its inception. We will not stop until it is replaced with a program that treats indigenous people in remote communities as equal to any other citizen of this country.”

ENDS

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