

Tuesday 29 August, 2017

Racist unemployment program is starving NT kids

Northern Territory MP Chancey Paech has told the Senate Enquiry into the Community Development Program (CDP) that he is using his electorate allowance to feed people in remote communities who are being left to go hungry by the fines handed out in the program.

The 30,000 Indigenous workers trapped in the CDP work longer hours in tougher conditions than any workers in metropolitan work-for-the-dole programs, and receive no wages.

Earlier this month Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion announced a “consultation process” in an attempt to deflect wide-spread criticism of the CDP, but that has amounted to nothing.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has extended an open invitation for more than a year to the Minister to meet with successive ACTU Secretaries and Indigenous leadership teams to discuss CDP.

During that time the ACTU has launched the First Nations Workers Alliance (FNWA), a voice for CDP workers.

Quotes Attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“The remote work-for-the-dole CDP program is giving Indigenous workers to companies as free labour and paying them nothing. Fines are given in CDP at a rate 70 times higher than other unemployment programs.”

“This program is crushing families in remote communities. They need real jobs and they need to be paid a legal wage.”

“CDP is discriminating against Indigenous people living in remote communities. We want to see it end. My predecessor Dave Oliver and I have been waiting to meet with the minister to discuss this for more than a year.”

Quotes attributable to ACTU Indigenous Officer Lara Watson:

“It’s unbelievable that a program administered by the Federal government devastated remote communities to the point that local MPs are having to step in to make sure that people don’t starve.”

“The evidence being heard in the Senate Enquiry is appalling but not surprising to anyone who has been following the awful evolution of CDP over the past year. This is a program which forces people to work with no OHS protection, for no wages, often doing manual labour, for 25 hours a week.”

“This program replaces what little employment exists in remote communities with unpaid positions in a racially discriminatory program.”

ENDS

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