

Wednesday 18 November 2020

ACTU Indigenous Conference plans renewed campaign against CDP

This year marks 20 years since the first ACTU Indigenous Conference. This year's conference brings together almost 100 union members from across the country, discussing a range of issues including a renewed campaign against the Morrison Government's racially discriminatory Community Development Program.

The CDP forces unemployed people in remote areas to work for free, sometimes for for-profit companies for 20 hours per week, without any basic workplace entitlements, or protection of federal OHS or worker's compensation laws. More than 80 per cent of people effected by CDP are Indigenous.

According to a report from the Prime Ministers own department last year, those subjected to the scheme were 20 per cent more likely to lose income due to onerous penalties than they were to get a job.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Indigenous Officer Lara Watson:

"This year has meant a lot of change for millions of Australians, but workers under CDP face the same discrimination and mistreatment that has been embedded in the scheme since its inception.

"Its an ongoing disgrace that we have unemployment policies in this country effectively divided on race.

"Despite accounting for a tiny percentage of overall welfare recipients the CDP routinely accounts for more than half of all financial penalties.

"A Senate inquiry into this program found it was causing starvation in some instances. We know of situations where people have been forced to work in temperatures exceeding 50 degrees.

"We have been fighting this program since it was announced and will continue to do so. This policy discriminates against Indigenous workers and forces them to work for nothing.

"Despite all the evidence of the harm it has done and continues to do, including in reports from its own departments, the Morrison Government continues to defend the program. We intend to make them accountable for that decision."

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