



# First Nations Reference Group

for the co-design of the Remote Jobs and Economic Development program

## Terms of Reference

### Context

1. As a first step to deliver the commitment to replace the Community Development Program (CDP), the Federal Government has announced the establishment of a Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program (RJED) in the second half of 2024 to provide people in remote communities with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions.
2. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap and its four priority reforms will provide the foundation for the co-design of the Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program. Shared decision-making is fundamental to the co-design of the new Program which is specifically for First Nations people and has its origins in the CDEP initiated by First Nations people in the 1970s. The four Priority Reforms are:
  - Formal partnership and shared decision making
  - Building the community-controlled sector
  - Transforming government organisations
  - Shared access to data and information at a regional level
3. The RJED aims to:
  - Create 3,000 new jobs in remote communities for CDP participants
  - Include a complementary Community Jobs and Business Fund for projects, capital and equipment in support of the creation of jobs under the program
  - Connect with opportunities in the private and public sectors to bring the economy to remote communities and generate long term permanent jobs
  - Include a focus on young people to improve their employment opportunities once they have finished school.
4. As not everyone will be ready to go into a job, a remote employment service will still be needed. CDP services will continue through an extension of CDP provider arrangements until 30 June 2025.

### Scope and Purpose

5. The FNRG will provide advice to Government on the design and implementation of the RJED. Matters to be considered are:
  - a) Policy design and implementation for the RJED and a new remote employment service, including the development of program guidelines;
  - b) Generate ideas on new approaches to reflect the difference in employment opportunities between remote and non-remote regions;



- c) Advice on best practice approaches to consultation and engagement for the RJED and a new remote employment service that reflect the commitments in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap;
  - d) A monitoring and reporting system which promotes improvements that are cognisant of the myriad of different and diverse demographics within Indigenous Australian, especially concerning the RJED and a new remote employment service; and
  - e) Progress and outcomes of existing community trials and the learnings for policy reform.
6. Relevant Commonwealth reforms and initiatives, such as Workforce Australia reforms, Remote Australia Working Group recommendations, and others could inform remote employment design. FNRG will receive relevant updates.

## Term

7. The FNRG will be effective from March 2024, and operate until the group considers that the scope and purpose have been fulfilled.

## Membership

8. A group of member organisations will be invited to nominate First Nations representatives to participate in the FNRG. Organisations will include, but not be limited to, the following criteria: being an Indigenous business, community controlled organisation, a training organisation, or a CDP provider, and the geographical locations that current CDP participants live in.
9. A select number of CDP providers to nominate representatives with lived experience of engaging with remote employment services.

## Meetings and Working Methods

10. The FNRG will be co-chaired by the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ms Josephine Douglas and Mr Matthew Clarke.
11. Co-chairs will conduct meetings, lead on the forward workplan, and agree meeting agendas.
12. The quorum for FNRG will be fifty per cent of the membership, plus one.
13. Decision making will be by consensus with respect to the advice provided to the Government.
14. Standards of conduct including conflicts of interest declarations will be detailed in the Member Organisation Agreements.
15. Some member organisations may be current funding recipients under the CDP or upcoming grant rounds for the RJED and/or a new remote employment service. If there is a declared conflict of interest, the NIAA Secretariat for the FNRG will record the details in a register and manage in compliance with the 'FNRG Conflicts of Interest Policy' to ensure any competitive advantage is minimised.
16. Representatives of member organisations must declare any private interests or relationships that could influence or could be perceived to influence advice provided by the FNRG, or advice provided to the NIAA, in the conflict of interest declaration form at any time for the duration of the Term.
17. The declaration or updating of conflicts of interest will be a standing item at FNRG meetings. Conflicts of interest declared during a FNRG meeting will also be recorded in the meeting minutes and added to the conflicts of interest register managed by the NIAA Secretariat for the FNRG.
18. The FNRG can request through the co-chairs to invite individuals with specialist expertise or representatives from Commonwealth Agencies to participate in or present information on specific policy issues at meetings.



19. The NIAA will provide a Secretariat for the FNRG which will aim to circulate relevant papers at least five days prior to meetings.
20. Information provided to representatives and meeting discussions should remain confidential.
21. The FNRG may choose to issue a communique following a meeting.
22. Member Organisations will be supported with travel and other arrangements (including sitting fees) for representatives' attendance at meetings as outlined in the Member Organisation Agreements.
23. These Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the FNRG every six months.

Finalised and agreed by the First Nations Reference Group on 10 April 2024.

