

MEEDAC Inc. (Region 5 Midwest West of Western Australia) response to the new CDP Proposed model.

Design Principles

Q: Do these objectives and design principles sound right?

Objectives of the new approach

Growing the remote labour market by creating real subsidised jobs

Providing incentives for job seekers to participate in their communities and move off welfare and into work, including through top ups as an incentive. (yes we agree with this objective for all eligible job seekers indigenous and non- indigenous, this should be government subsidised

- *Any new model would adopt a tailored, community based approach, with greater local control and decision making.*

This approach will only work in remote regions, on Indigenous communities. Regions who are required to deal with Local Governments as the community leaders need to have this taken into consideration during reviews and not be penalised.

- *The aim is to build skills, employability and opportunity; strengthen communities to achieve their goals and aspirations;*

Again this approach will work in remote regions but, semi remote regions should be assessed on the discussions with the local shire and industry that identify current employment trends and apply this knowledge to the delivery of the program.

- *Enable greater community control and decision-making; and ensure good protections for job seekers.*

This would not be advisable in the semi remote regions and could cause major issues between jobseekers and families. Whereas remote Australia has a stronger sense of family and community.

If this approach is adopted in semi remote regions this concept could cause major fractures between families and their communities as an underlying animosity could increase, which would in turn jeopardise any current strategies the police and community have in place to create a safe community.

With communities that have a high rate of non-indigenous job seekers this approach could have a catastrophic effect as their family and community bonding is different. Some of these jobseekers live isolated lives, estranged from family and or community.

- *It is envisaged that local community boards and community leaders, as key participants in the delivery of a new programme, would work closely with service providers.*

No this could possibly cause conflict in Semi Remote Regions.

Community engagement and feedback is already active throughout the CDP. Continue to encourage ongoing community support and input but any final decisions made regarding the CDP should remain with the provider. This approach reduces any conflict within the community.

- *This includes involvement in setting activities, identifying priority industries for employment and advising on investment needs in enabling support services, such as literacy and numeracy. By encouraging community involvement, it is expected that services will be more responsive and better targeted, and the challenges and cost of remote service delivery will significantly reduce.*

This is happening in the current model, past Provider Performance Reviews have evidence of this. It is our opinion that it should continue in the new model. Broaden the scope of activities to accommodate for cultural and non-vocational activities.

Q: Is there anything else that a remote employment and participation model should aim to achieve?

Response:

- The performance and delivery model needs to take into consideration the variance in regions from the very remote, remote and semi remote.
- The caseload associated to each region, the percentage of Indigenous to non-indigenous.
- Consideration also needs to be taken in to account when the region does not work in closed Indigenous communities, where discussion on the community's requirements are with local shires.
- Change the name from Work for Dole to Work for Communities (WFC)
- Consideration for people with special needs and disabilities

MEEDAC has discussed at length the three proposals and have responded to the questions in each Option but we would like to state that our preference is to remain with the current CDP model (Option3) with improvements.

Options for a Future Model

Option 1.

Q: The option of a 'three tiered' approach in a new model is designed to stream job seekers according to work capacity – will streaming assist in better servicing the caseload and moving people along a pathway to employment?

- We do not support the proposed streaming of jobseekers this labels people which may or may not cause concern for the individual and or other community members/jobseekers.
- Instead of the tiered approach, a more detail assessment needs to be completed on the jobseeker. This assessment will be commenced at the initial appointment, if multiple barriers are identified e.g. medical, mental health or physical etc., providers should be able to give the job seeker an exemption period from their WFD requirement for 6 months. During this time a comprehensive assessment will be completed, if required medical evidence and physiological assessment can be gathered and made available for an assessment by Centrelink. If after the initial 6 months' WFD exemption an DHS assessment has not been completed or is in progress, then a further WFD exemption off up to 6 months can be applied.

Q: Is there merit in moving elements of a new model outside the national income support and compliance system to ensure a simpler and more accessible system for job seekers? If so, which elements?

- We do not agree to a wage system outside the national income support.
- A CDEP like activities could be implemented with a targeted number of placements per region or for the overall program. If these positions are to be indigenous only then these placements should be for regions with low employment opportunities and 100% Indigenous caseloads.

Q: How could we improve the job seeker assessment process to ensure job seekers are streamed appropriately, their strengths and aspirations are taken into account and their hours match their capacity to work?

- A comprehensive assessment tool to be used by all regions, the identified tool to be decided by the PMC and implemented to the job seeker via the system. The assessment would need to be completed upon every initial appointment and at every 12 months of participation or as required. If the job seeker is identified as being highly disadvantaged they will enter an "intensive" phase for an initial 6 months, with a possibility of an extension.
- Providers to be trained to carry out the more intensive assessment so that a uniformed delivery is assured.
- Arrange for a physiological assessment to completed, if required, for mental health barriers.

- Type of evidence can include: Medical evidence from doctors, community nurses, mental health nurses or hospital staff

Q: How many (maximum) hours of required activity would be appropriate in each of the tiers? How should hours be structured (e.g. daily or monthly? Flexibility to schedule outside of business hours)?

- 15 hours per week for job seekers with mutual obligations or to their work capacity.
- These will align as close to the minimum award hourly rate as possible
- Hours should be more flexible to suit the jobseeker and or community this could include, 3 days per week, weekend activities that take in sports to encourage the development of organised sport, out of work hours' activities like bus patrols which promote safer communities

Q: Should subsidised jobs only be available to Indigenous job seekers or all job seekers in remote Australia?

- All Jobseekers.
- If the decision for the subsidised jobs does apply for only Indigenous people, allow for wages subsidies or continue with the employment incentive payments for non-indigenous and Indigenous employment placements.

Option 2 - CDP 2

Q: Should we move to the proposed CDP 2 model?

If no:

- Providers taking over all the payments would cause major conflict in some regional communities and put staff at risk, when payment is not paid due to non-participation.
- Continuing with the National Income Support system ensures fair and equitable compliance outcomes.

Q: Which aspects of the CDP Bill should and should not be considered in a new model?

- It was discussed at previous provider meetings; a number of positions would be made available across the regions to run CDEP like activities. With Job Seekers participating in this activity to move across to a CDEP like payment. This idea would have a positive effect on the regions who have a high number of indigenous jobseekers with low employment prospects.
- Also discussed, Centrelink PST and CDP staff to work together in deciding suitable compliance action for PRs and CCA's. This allows local and provider knowledge to be taken into consideration for the final decision.

Option 3 - Community Development Programme (CDP) with improvements

Q: Should we retain the current CDP model?

If yes:

- The overall program structure works well but the linking of payment to attendance can cause distress to the providers. This issue has been raised at various provider meetings.
- A basic payment rate per month to be guaranteed for all commenced jobseekers. This will simplify the process.

- The WFD payment to be paid for attendance, DNAV, DNAI with compliance action. With the guaranteed basic payment per month, it will give us the option of using DNAD if the circumstances of their non-attendance is unusual or compliance action is not the best option for the jobseeker and not penalise the provider financially.
- The current program should remain within the National Income Support System as it is fair and equitable to all jobseekers.
- The compliance framework works, as PST is the third party and are the final decision maker in the process, this lessens that ramifications on the providers for the reduction of income because of compliance action.
- Our issue is with linking the provider payments to the compliance process.

Q: What aspects of the CDP are working and which parts would benefit from reform?

- We already have a wide range of options for activities under the current CDP that address the vocational needs of our jobseeker as well as giving back to our communities.
- Funding of activities to address non-vocational issues would be beneficial to the provider and the jobseeker as specialist services could be sought to address major issues instead of waiting for the minimal services that are currently available in some regions.
- Cultural based activities may also need extra funding to deliver a successful activity.
- 15 hours per week for job seekers with mutual obligations or to their work capacity, this will align as close to the minimum award hourly rate as possible
- Hours should be more flexible to suit the jobseeker and or community this could include, 3 days per week, weekend activities that take in sports to encourage the development of organised sport, out of work hours' activities like bus patrols which promote safer communities
- A comprehensive job seeker assessment created by PMC, implemented to the job seeker via the system (an extension of the JSCI). The assessment would need to be completed upon every initial and at every 12 months of participation. If the job seeker is identified as being highly disadvantaged they will enter an "intensive" phase for an initial 6 months, with a possibility of an extension. This would also allow consideration for job seekers with a disability or ESAT recommendation for DES.
- A more effective way to measure provider assistance. Remove the IMT and allow the system to import the intervention recommendations from the ESAT straight into the job plan. This will ensure that the identified barriers are addressed or future assistance assured when the jobseeker is willing and able (D&A and Mental health issues).
- Having a more detailed assessment completed on the jobseeker will also identify undiagnosed barriers or issues that although identified in the JSCI do not trigger an ESAT or does not meet the requirements of an ESAT i.e. completion of an ESAT will not make any changes to the job seekers circumstances or requirements.
- Providers, through the assessment, will identify barriers and work with jobseeker to address these barriers if and when required. Identified assistance offered to address barriers now and or the future to be added to the job plan as a part of the pathway plan.
- Provider receives a basic payment for all active job seekers. W4D payment for those job seekers participating in activities.
- Allow notification on the system when DHS approves a medical certificate and alert the provider of the dates agreed to.
- PMC to provide funding to train staff to work alongside job seekers with special needs/ highly disadvantaged.
- Modify the job plan tool so that the WFD activity hours and days will auto populate across the bulk hours in the activities diary creating the job seekers WFD placement.
- Activities diaries to identify when a jobseeker is on suspension so that you do not have to check to see if hours have not been added etc.

Q: Do the suggested improvements capture the biggest issues with the current model?

- Yes, any suggested improvements have been listed above.

Q: Are there other short-term/small scale changes which we could make to improve the operation of the CDP?

- Remove the IMT and allow the system to import the intervention recommendations from the ESAT straight into the job plan. This will ensure that the identified barriers are addressed or future assistance assured when the jobseeker is willing and able (D&A and Mental health issues).
- Allow notification on the system when DHS approves a medical certificate and alert the provider of the dates agreed to.
- Extend the additional text in the job plans and activity descriptions.
- Notification on the system or through reports of the bulk hours' end dates.
- The ability to create an appointment for a jobseeker directly from the calendar.
- Allow evidence to be attached to a special claim.
- In the job seeker diary, provide the option to search for provider appointments only.
- Allocation of ESAT appointments for CDP providers only
- Ability to auto populate information from previous active PR's.
- Clear and comprehensive information sheet for jobseekers that explain their mutual obligations.
- Greater access to job seeker income support information.
- PMC to release more promotional and information material that providers can use
- Update and release the draft guidelines
- Create useable learning centre modules for CDP

Q: Is there merit in staying within a national income support and compliance system?

- YES the National Income Support System is fair and equitable to all jobseekers.

Q: How can current interactions with the Department of Human Services and/or CDP providers be improved and simplified?

- Allocation of ESAT appointments for CDP providers only
- Provide CDP job seekers with a direct CDP only DHS and PST phone service
- Greater access to job seeker income support information.
- When a job seeker participates in a CCA enable a provider representative to participate in the meeting with the jobseeker.
- Direct representative at the local Centrelink office for providers to contact.

Discussion on proposed options for a future model

Q: Which of the model options best suit the needs of remote communities?

- Option 3 stay with the current model with identified improvements

Q: Is there another option or additional design features than need to be considered?

- As mentioned above

Q: How could a new model better take into account community, family and cultural responsibilities?

- As mentioned above

Q: How do we ensure greater accountability to community and stronger cultural authority?

- Continue to encourage communication with community members, local shires and other service providers. Providers to have an open and regular communication that can be verified through meeting minutes, questionnaires, suggestion/feedback forms etc.

Q: Does Government have a jobs creation role in remote? If so, how do we ensure subsidised jobs don't become a destination?

- Yes- Indigenous remote areas only
- Implement a maximum time period of 12 months in a subsidised job. During the 12 months the provider will provide intensive support to increase the job seekers employability and work to identify employment options for the jobseeker to move into post the 12 months.

Q: How can we further stimulate the local job market, beyond the inclusion of subsidised jobs in a new model, to incentivise employers to hire local people and support them to stay in work?

- Employer incentives/wage assistance payment for work experience/ hosted placements and employment placements. Employer incentives at the 13 week and 26-week mark.
- Providers to be given a 10% bonus payment of the total outcome payment for a long term unemployed jobseeker placed into employment and remaining there for 26 weeks
- Job seeker incentives to remain in employment or work experience/ hosted placements.
- PMC to promote through media the importance and the benefits to working alongside CDP and their job seekers. (release more published documents for providers to circulate.)

Q: How do we create incentives and better connections within a remote employment model to support the establishment and growth of Indigenous businesses?

- Re-introduce NEIS in CDP with an Indigenous focus.
- Provide a pool of funding for providers to assist job seekers to create a business plan and start up their business.
- IAS Funding information developed in a simple step by step guide so that individuals and or groups can easily understand and it makes it clear what their requirements will be through the process.