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Submission on the Indigenous Skills, Engagement and Employment Program

The East Arnhem Regional Council is comprised of a total of up to 126 Members across 9 Local Authorities, which include 14 Councillors elected from 6 cultural based electoral wards, that are all connected through song lines, bloodlines, ceremony and family, to represent over 10,000 people, with an Aboriginal population over 90 per cent.

This Submission follows contributions made on 9 July 2021 to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs (HORSCIA) Inquiry into Pathways and Participation Opportunities for Indigenous Australians in Employment and Business by Deputy President Djuwalpi Marika, Councillor Keith Lapulung Dhamarrandji and Councillor Joe Djakala, and senior staff; and contributions to Roundtable Discussions about the future of Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) employment investment, and the new Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) in Nhulunbuy, the Northern Territory, on 1 September 2021, by CEO Dale Keehne.

It is important to note that the Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTEC), Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG) and Employment Parity Initiative (EPI) are all not provided in the East Arnhem Region, with CDP being the relevant program in the region.

CDP has proved a highly problematic program and Council has found it has not provided job ready clients, as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are often reluctant to engage with the program based on past negative experiences including perceived inconsistent, unreliable or culturally insensitive service provision.

The more recent '1,000 jobs Package' is more aligned with creating real jobs and community benefit. However, it has had insufficient uptake, linked to the time it takes to engage and recruit participants through this process, and not allowing flexibility for turnover of staff.

In light of the ineffectiveness of these programs and the many iterations of them over many years, Council supports the re-direction of all funding currently provided to CDP to an increase in direct funding of wage subsidies

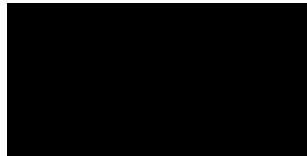


through programs like the successful Indigenous Employment Initiative (IEI). The Northern Territory Government has a similar wage subsidy program called Indigenous Jobs Development Funding.

This will enable Council and other employers to directly employ more Aboriginal people in real jobs across a wide range of useful areas, with funds that are currently utilised to little effect to fund CDP providers and government officials to administer the complex and inefficient CDP program. Council estimates at least one third of current CDP participants could be in active employment, which would represent a major improvement in employment outcomes and the flow on socio-economic benefits.

This proposal builds on the success of a targeted and streamlined process, where successful practices of actual employers in the direct recruitment, support, mentoring and development of Aboriginal workers, are rewarded through the amount of subsidies provided, in line with the exact amount of hours worked.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Executive Officer
East Arnhem Regional Council