

# Indigenous Skills, Engagement and Employment Program (ISEP) Discussion Paper

*Response to NIAA*

6 August 2021



Jobs Australia

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Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of Jobs Australia's Members.

Sincerely,



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## 1. About Jobs Australia

Jobs Australia is the national peak body which helps Not for Profit employment and community services all over Australia to provide the best possible assistance to disadvantaged communities and people.

With our expertise in employment services, and because we are funded solely by our Members, we can advocate to government and others for what's right and best in helping unemployed people - with real insight and an independent voice.

We represent the largest network of Not for Profit employment-related community services in Australia - with Members ranging from small local community agencies to large national charities.

## 2. About this Submission

The views expressed in this submission are the views of Jobs Australia. While our views are informed by our consultations and meetings with our Members, they should not be taken to be the views of any provider or group of providers.

## 3. Executive Summary

On 13 May 2021, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, The Hon Ken Wyatt, AM, MP, announced that a new Indigenous Skills, Engagement and Employment Program (ISEP) would be developed, for implementation from July 2022. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) provided a public discussion paper on ISEP and invited submissions.

This submission has been assembled following extensive consultation with the Jobs Australia Members responsible for delivering the Community Development Program (CDP).

Jobs Australia Members welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of the ISEP. As a collective group, these Members have an enormous amount of experience in remote and regional Indigenous Australian issues and challenges. They understand, because they are Indigenous Australian owned and governed, the key issues confronting the people currently referred to as 'participants' each day.

At the core of the Jobs Australia recommendation is that the current CDP Enterprise, no matter what form or program it delivers going forward post July 2022 remains a central hub from which investment in all work readiness programs are initiated.

This would include:

- Community led work-like activities
- Community agreed individually tailored pathways
- Training and Learning

- Work experience and internships
- Part time/ trial employment
- Full time casual employment
- Development and management of small to medium business
- The development of Indigenous Australian enterprise to the extent it can further employ Indigenous Australian people.
- Labour Market Hire

Members do not appreciate the implications of the New Employment Services Model and how that model will impact Indigenous Australian people in current CDP regions. In some cases, it may function, whilst in others, Members question the extent of infrastructure and other technical barriers.

Members have been delighted to share the benefit of their experience on how to best increase economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians and drive actions that connect Indigenous Australians to jobs, targeted skills acquisition, and career advancement opportunities.

This submission contains an aggregate of opinion, and we remain available for further discussion upon your request.

## 4. Introduction

The Community Development Program has achieved a great many successes.

However, and as with all programs of this nature, there have been challenges in Employment Services Programs across regional and remote Australia.

These challenges appear to be two-fold:

- for reasons both of the program and its compliance based model.
- for reasons “upstream” of the program and which commonly form in the years prior to the young Indigenous Australian person becoming a CDP participant.

There has been an expectation that the CDP program (together with associated support services) can be the principal form of development of people towards functional employment within a reasonably short time, when many of the issues intrinsic to participants have taken years, decades and even generations to form.

At the present time, the Australian Employment Programs and consequently the providers sector is experiencing a profound reformation. Compliance aspects are being in part, replaced with a more ‘values initiated, or personal incentive based approach. This is a precursor to a program to be launched in approximately 18 months, which will generate greater levels of employment, it is hoped, for remote and regional Indigenous Australian people seeking work.

The NIAA expressed an interest in stakeholders' views on whether Indigenous-specific employment investment should target specific cohorts, transition points, regions, industries, barriers. Jobs Australia Members who are also CDP providers are pleased to assist with the following responses to questions.

## 5. NIAA Questions and Jobs Australia Response

### Labour Market Plan

**How could IAS investment be designed to be more flexible and responsive at the regional level, and better meet the needs of the community for Indigenous job seekers and employers?**

Jobs Australia recommends that the initial point of consideration for targeted finance is in the development of a dynamic Labour Market Plan for each (current) CDP Region.

It is essential that the Labour Market Plan has a register of all existing new and or seasonal employment positions and opportunities.

It is important that minimum entry requirements for each position is documented, including:

- Driver's license
- Participation or academic records
- Other statements requiring capability – ability to ride a horse; welding; experience in a medical centre; certificate level/ticket-based qualifications including White card; Heights; Forklift; Responsible Service of Alcohol
- Competencies required

Please refer to the link provided to the National Skills Commission:

<https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/23-core-competencies-importance-set-base-transferable-skills>

Accommodation, on the job training, certificate training requirements, shift/standard hours, any time away from home are recorded.

Once this information is gathered and centralised for each Provider Service Area, it can be used to:

- Identify gap between employment readiness
- Discuss a development pathway for the individual participants
- Determine if mentoring, coaching or other referred services are required

This information will inform investment from the local industry area, ensuring relevance to local and non-local employment markets.

Production and continuous review of the Labour Market Plan and specific employment opportunities should be placed with the (current) CDP Provider.

Jobs Australia recommends the current Providers are best positioned to deliver the Labour Market Plan. CDP Providers should also have a local input into locally based wages subsidies and fully subsidised employment positions.

### Indigenous Skills, Engagement and Employment Program (ISEP)

**How should the Indigenous Skills, Engagement and Employment Program (ISEP) work alongside the New Employment Services Model and the new Remote Engagement Program to build work-ready skills and connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to rewarding, sustainable jobs?**

It is not clear how the New Employment Services Model will be applied in regional and remote CDP regions, especially in communities where there is no employment.

There are further issues concerning cellular coverage, access to smart device technology and capacity to use that technology; English as secondary or tertiary level language; cultural and other differences.

In many remote communities there is no (Wi-Fi) connectivity, and when there is a large proportion of the broadband capacity is satellite delivered.

In a sense it is these observed gaps which can be used to effectively inform development of the New Employment Services Model and the new Remote Engagement Program.

There may be a reduced suite of barriers in regional towns. Many regional towns have (currently) CDP, increased functionality of job seekers and robust infrastructure along with a dynamic employment market.

In these cases, investment can be directed into the production of a definitive, detailed Labour Market Plan as described in this document (response 1).

## Community Based Workforce Planning

**NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on how Indigenous-specific employment investment should be monitored and meaningful data collected and made accessible to demonstrate clear outcomes. How can we embed shared-decision making in community-based workforce planning?**

In principle, we recommend that the destination (community based workforce planning) is described in more detail for a definitive response to be generated.

We observe the following:

Employment away from home/region/community	Employee development typically provided by corporate employer (Mining, Health care, Tourism, etc) or state	Investment to be directed to establishment of minimum skills required to secure 'start' of employment in away from home living/working
Employment within the home/region/community	Employee development typically provided by small to medium businesses	Investment will be typically directed towards training and other local skills acquisition/assimilation
Employment on community	Employee development provided by the small business	Minimum skills are required as a pre-emptor to employment. On the job training is provided

Current CDP Providers are well suited to manage grants and provide auspice services in the first instance, to investment in indigenous-specific employment services and to provide clear outcomes.

**Shared decision making in community based outcomes can be provided by the collaboration of local community councils and the CDP provider.**

## Potential Employers

**How can the ISEP encourage potential employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide safe and culturally appropriate work environments? How can employers better value the skills and perspectives of Indigenous employees?**

NIAA is interested in understanding how all employers, including Indigenous employers and SMEs, can be supported to further employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Jobs Australia believes that providing an open, welcoming and non-discriminatory workplace irrespective of the size/revenue and nature of the business in order that potential and new employees are attracted to, and retained, in the workplace.

One of the many significant ironies of Cultural Awareness, Cultural Safety programs is that frequently it is prescribed and not co-developed by specific tribe, or language group. So, when the term 'cultural safety' is used – one might ask for which culture?

Current and potential employers might be provided with a template enabling local Indigenous Australian people to co-develop the content for a model which informs and integrates local culture into the workplace in a manner which is, at the least, complimentary to that business and at best, business-value generating.

Jobs Australia recommends the current CDP organisations are provided with tools and funding support (if required) to develop local area-specific models which equip employers to better value the skills and perspectives of Indigenous Australian employees.

Recognition of employer's excellence in this important area of work-cultural life integration might be considered. For example – ISO27001 and government accreditation is used as a marker of achievement for IT Security. Perhaps there should be a similar national standard for Cultural Awareness and Safety practice in the workplace.

## Local Employment Focus

**NIAA is interested in understanding how all employers, including Indigenous employers and SMEs, can be supported to further employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. How should the ISEP consider a local focus?**

More information is sought.

The (current) CDP providers can be instrumental in establishing localised jobs hubs - like the Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks, or post local area disaster employment hubs.

Within the current context CDP Providers can form local area stakeholder employment hubs and through the mechanism of the hub, identify local are employer opportunities and supports and ensure grant funding is available to support employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Defined Boundaries

**NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on whether defined boundaries required for the ISEP, or whether applicants for funding under the ISEP are best placed to determine the local region within the context of a specific funding proposal?**

More information would be ideal. However, in the first instance we recommend using the CDP Region as a point of commencement/ defined boundary for local community, except when there is a specific/specialist employment sector across regions – in which case, creating a specialist overlay to a generalist CDP region might be considered. (For example, Mining).

## 6. Recommendations

At the core of the Jobs Australia recommendations is that the current CDP Enterprise, no matter what form or program it delivers going forward post July 2022, remains a central hub from which investment in all work readiness programs are initiated.

Members do not appreciate the implications of the New Employment Services Model and how that model will impact Indigenous Australian people in current CDP regions. In some cases, it may function, whilst in others, Members question the extent of infrastructure and other technical barriers.

Members have been delighted to share the benefit of their experience on how to best increase economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians and drive actions that connect Indigenous Australians to jobs, targeted skills acquisition, and career advancement opportunities.

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