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Ms Kathryn (Kate) Elliott  
Branch Manager, Remote Employment Programs and Implementation  
National Indigenous Australians Agency

By email to [kate.elliott@niaa.gov.au](mailto:kate.elliott@niaa.gov.au)

Dear Kate,

**RE: DISCUSSION TOWARDS THE DESIGN AND PROVISION OF RELEVANT ACTIVITIES FOR CDP PARTICIPANTS**

Thank you for providing the opportunity to contribute towards the design and provision of voluntary CDP activities.

In approaching this multi-faceted challenge my memory has prompted the “CDEP days” where the Kurrungal Council (Wangkatjungka, Ngumpan and Kupartya communities) was instructed by the communities to sound a bull-horn at 0830am coinciding with the start of school classes and at 0835am the power to all houses was turned off for 3 hours. This was not an imposition of the CDEP program, but an expression of the influence and community support for a program all people on those three communities felt they owned. Participation was often more than 70% and importantly output from the activities was measurable. (I should also explain that CDEP is increasingly romanticised and like all employment services programs had considerable flaws.)

It is important to reflect on recent national events and those events influenced on the current situation:

- Activity participation was not perfect prior to COVID-19.
- The suspension of mutual obligations due to COVID-19.
- Increased income from jobseeker payment.
- Weather and cultural-caused pause to CDP Program end 2020.
- Removal of suspension of Mutual Obligations.
- Removal of need to participate in activities.
- Return of increasingly oppressive weather conditions end 2021.

Further, I suggest there may be causal inputs beyond the CDP that influence participation, and these include:

- CDP participant health and well-being.
- Absence or insufficient availability of support services.
- In some areas a decline in traditional structures and the ageing of Elders.
- In some areas a view that the CDP program has declined in relevance.

These factors being ‘as they are’ the challenge for CDP activities to have sufficient relevance leading to increased participation is not reduced. I think it is useful to consider the following questions in order to try and ‘circle’ the opportunity to influence activity design and participation.

- Do we know what participants are doing with their time now?
- What matters more – the activity or the incentive?
- Do we understand their individual and collective/community views of the CDP?
- Is there a value towards activity participation (in general)?
- Is it possible that any activity and engagement incentive will be treated with indifference?
- What process can providers identify what matters?
- Who is best to identify what matters?
- What is personally interesting to the participant?
- What is identified by community?
- Who is best to represent opportunities?
- How to make any opportunity sustainable so that participation is not a single unit (hour/half day/day) event?
- What are the current barriers to participation (focus on the environmental, not the personal)?
- Who will lead and represent the activities – why and how?
- How is scope, scale and duration to be designed?
- What are reasonable expectations on participation?
- What and how should results be viewed?

Jobs Australia recently submitted its Member contribution to the CDP New Engagement Model. One of the key messages from that submission is that significant focus can be applied to activities designed to strengthen identity and culture.

I hope the thoughts in this letter can be used towards our collective discussion.

Yours sincerely,



**Richard Butler**  
**Policy Advisor**  
**Jobs Australia Limited**

cc: D.Cerasa, CEO, Jobs Australia Limited  
cc: N.Steers, Acting CEO, Jobs Australia Limited