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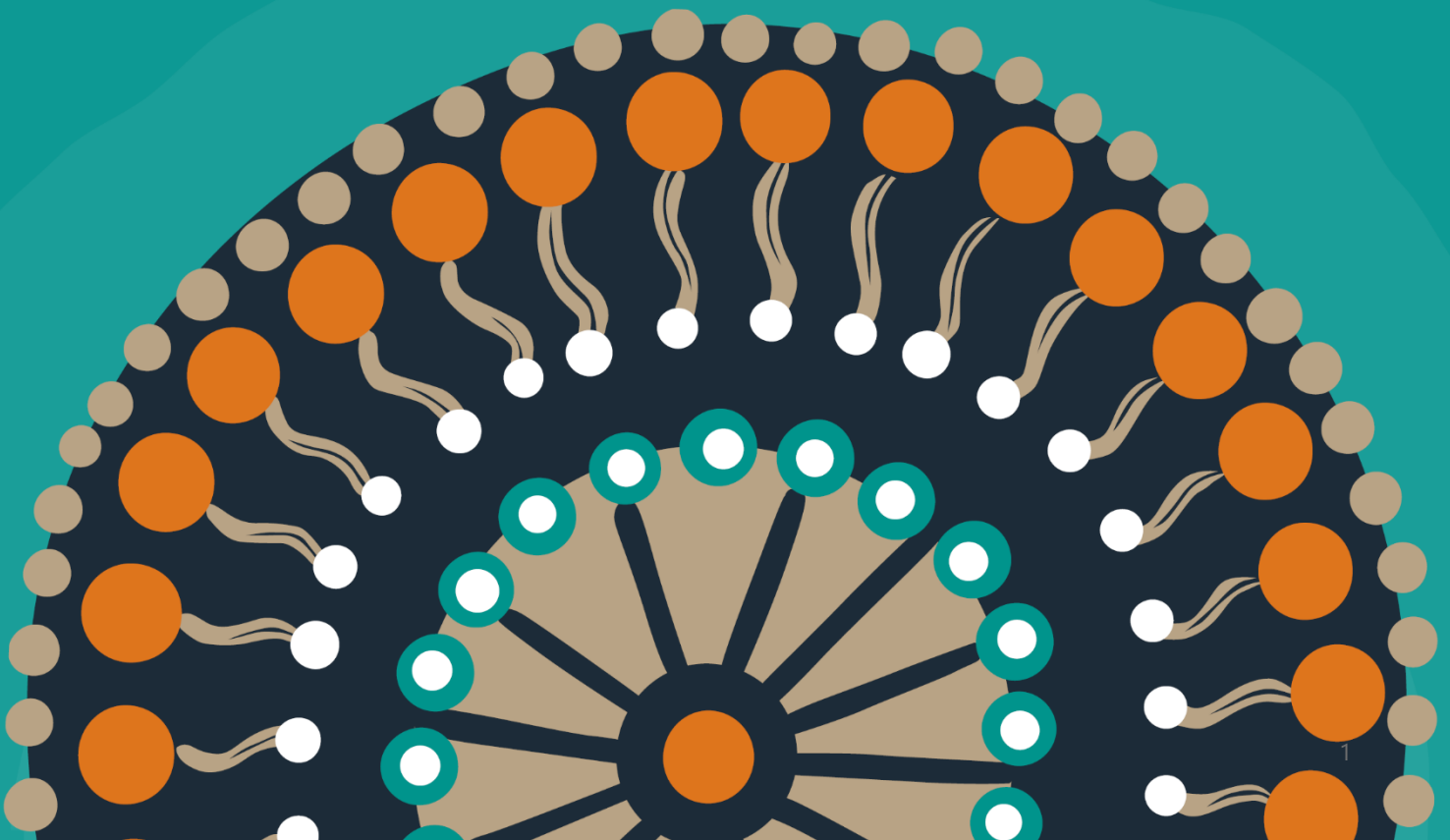


National Indigenous
Australians Agency

Replacing the Community Development Program

Impact Analysis

Prepared by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)





Australian Government

More information about how to complete an IA can be found in the [Australian Government Guide to Policy Impact Analysis](#), and the related [User Guide](#). These guides can be found on the OIA website.

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Executive Summary

The Australian Government has provided employment services to job seekers in remote Australia since 1977. Remote regions of Australia are currently serviced by the Community Development Program (CDP), targeting the unique circumstances of people interacting with labour markets in discrete communities. The CDP was introduced in 2015 and sought to implement a typical work week, with participants completing work-like activities in remote areas to better prepare them for employment.

Remote Australia generally has thin labour markets and lower employment rates compared to non-remote areas. Employment outcomes decrease as remoteness increases. Many remote communities have a dearth of job opportunities, contributing to economic and social issues. Similarly, job seekers may not be prepared to enter the workforce immediately when opportunities arise and may face significant barriers to achieving employment.

The Australian Government has committed to replacing the CDP with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions. The commitment stems from the need to address thin labour markets in remote Australia, who are unlikely to naturally resolve into positive outcomes. Remote job seekers require a high quality, fit for purpose employment service to achieve positive outcomes. Successful implementation of CDP reform would contribute to a range of positive impacts, including increased employment in remote Australia, workforce development, local economic development, increased income and reduced reliance on income support, improving capacity of community organisations and individual empowerment and engagement.

The Australian Government has committed to working in partnership with remote communities to reform the CDP. A phased approach to consultation with remote communities was undertaken across 2023 and 2024. This included consultations with community members, job seekers, employers, CDP providers, local corporations, council members and other stakeholders. Phase 1 of the consultations heard from over 2,250 people in over 100 remote communities, seeking to ‘listen and learn’ the views of remote community members on how to design and deliver a program to replace the CDP. Phase 2 of the consultations heard the views of over 3,000 people in around 200 remote communities, over 80 survey and submission responses and eight roundtables attended by community organisations, private sector organisations and state/territory and federal government representatives.

A new First Nations Reference Group (FNRG) was established in March 2024, reinforcing the Government’s commitment to Closing the Gap by working in partnership with First Nations people. FNRG members are economic development experts across remote Australia, including members of peak organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business leaders, training providers and governing bodies.



The NIAA considered two reform options to addressing comparatively lower employment outcomes for Australians in remote communities. These two options considered in this Impact Analysis are:

- **Option 1:** Retain the status quo (i.e. continue the CDP)
- **Option 2:** Replace the CDP with two complementary programs – the Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program (RJED) and a new remote employment service

Based on the information gathered through the consultation process, NIAA considers the preferred approach to be Option 2: replacing the CDP program with two complementary programs, the RJED program and a new remote employment service.

Option 2 has a higher regulatory burden than Option 1, though it is more likely to benefit job seekers, remote communities, local employers and community organisations. Option 1 allows the continuation of thin or non-existent labour markets and unique socio-economic conditions causing inefficiency and inequitable outcomes for remote job seekers. Option 2 will help to address barriers to employment that have been prevalent in remote communities, including training and skills development opportunities, as well as linking participants with suitable employment opportunities. Option 2 will include a new remote employment service designed to better support remote job seekers through a case-management approach to drive engagement and aspiration among participants.

The complementary programs will be evaluated at the program level to understand their contribution to lifting employment rates in remote communities, and whether the intended benefits are eventuating.



Background

Current Employment services

The Government operates three employment services across Australia. By design, the three programs are mutually exclusive. In non-remote areas the operating services are Workforce Australia and Disability Employment Services, which support people with a disability. Workforce Australia is administered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and Disability Employment Services are administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS).

In remote areas the operating service is the Community Development Program (CDP), which is administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). Remote employment services delivered by the Government target the unique circumstances of people interacting with remote labour markets. Generally, all individuals living in remote Australia who are in receipt of an eligible income support payment are required to participate in the CDP. The CDP is based on remote regions, so it applies equally to all job seekers living in remote Australia, including First Nations and non-Indigenous people. People not in receipt of an income support payment can volunteer to participate in the CDP.

History of remote employment services

The Australian Government has provided employment services to job seekers in some form in remote Australia since 1977. To remain fit for purpose, programs have continuously evolved over time.

Community Development Employment Projects

Government investment in remote employment began in 1977 and was known as the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP). This is when Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory asked the Government to help them design a program that could address the negative effects of “sit down” money in their community. The first CDEP started in Bamyili (now Barunga) in the Northern Territory, with funding provided to the local Aboriginal council so it could pay for work undertaken by individual community members.

CDEP expanded across remote Australia, but places were capped, leaving two classes of jobseekers in remote communities. Criticisms of CDEP included that it isolated First Nations people from regular labour markets, did not provide superannuation or long service leave to participants, demanded complex administration of small community organisations and subsidised State and local government responsibilities. In 2007 ‘demand-driven’ income support was introduced instead of a capped CDEP wage to apply consistent treatment of First Nations people in remote areas. Feedback from subsequent consultation processes has



included that the move to income support left many participants feeling they were on welfare and did not deliver positive employment outcomes.

Remote Jobs and Communities Program

In 2013, the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) replaced CDEP as well as three other services operating in remote areas: Job Services Australia, Disability Employment Services and the Indigenous Employment program. RJCP provided a single ‘front door’ for all people in remote areas to address vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment. Providers needed to complete and agree to a range of plans; however, they were deemed overly complex and unnecessary. There was also a perception that RJCP had a supply-driven focus on addressing the needs of jobseekers without a clear picture of the labour market demand. In 2015, RJCP was replaced by the CDP.

Community Development Program

In July 2015, the CDP began operating to prepare job seekers living in remote Australia for work by offering a pathway to learn and develop new skills or build upon existing skills, to increase their experience and work-readiness through flexible work-like activities and placements in real work settings.

The CDP sought to implement a typical work week with work-like activities on job seekers in remote areas to better prepare them for work.

Under the current arrangements, CDP providers are required to tailor a package of assistance suited to each individual job seeker based on their needs and readiness for employment. CDP activities are designed with the aim of supporting local communities and being responsive to available and future employment opportunities.

When participation in activities became voluntary for CDP participants in May 2021, penalties reduced significantly, providing people with income support certainty but at the same time there has been a steady decline in work-like activities provided through CDP. However, CDP activities provided communities with beneficial functions such as community maintenance, gardening, rubbish collection and construction of funeral shelters. During consultations in 2024, some communities noted that participating in community activities helped build confidence and overall well-being.

Social security system

The Australian Government’s social security system is widely accessible and provides all eligible Australians with a social security safety net in the form of income support. No matter where someone lives in Australia, if they are a recipient of income support, they are under the same eligibility criteria as set out in social security law for income support payments.



Within Australia, there are no geographical exclusions to the safety net provided by the social security system, however people living in remote Australia may be eligible to receive an additional Remote Area Allowance, to help meet additional costs associated with residing in remote areas.

Services Australia is the service delivery agency responsible for the delivery of the overarching social security system that CDP operates in. Income support payments are predominantly administered by Services Australia under the Social Security Act 1991, whereby an applicant is assessed for their individual capacity to work.

The policies of these individual agencies (NIAA, DEWR and DSS) come together through Services Australia service delivery. Services Australia delivers services in relation to income support received by remote job seekers (including assessing eligibility and paying income support), administers the Jobseeker Compliance Framework (penalties for non-compliance), and refers remote job seekers to the CDP. Further, Services Australia assesses and determines a job seeker's work capacity and mutual obligation requirements, including whether exemptions for medical incapacity, undertaking cultural business, and other special circumstances should apply.

Income support payments can be applied for under various schemes such as Job Seeker Payment, Carer Payment, Disability Support Payment, Paid Parental Leave and Special Benefit. Each scheme has its own job capacity or capability assessment process to help understand the conditions that affect a person's ability to participate in work, their family situation, household income, health profile and other relevant information. The delivery of income support and additional payments or benefits is assessed on a case-by-case basis, ranging from simple to complex service needs.



1. What is the policy problem you are trying to solve and what data is available?

High rates of unemployment in remote Australia

Labour market conditions vary across Australia and overall remote Australia has weaker labour market conditions than major cities. Broadly, people who live in cities and metropolitan areas are more likely to be employed compared to people living outside of these areas. Key reasons for this are fewer employment opportunities and reduced access to work outside of metropolitan areas results in a smaller range of career and employment opportunities¹. A strong labour market, with a high rate of employment is central to a strong economy and prosperous and inclusive society². The map below at Figure 1 illustrates that generally labour markets are poorer in remote areas. Broadly this means there are additional challenges for both job seekers and employers in remote Australia³.

Employment outcomes also vary between First Nations and non-Indigenous people across Australia. The CDP is not a First Nations specific program; however, it is important to note that between 1 July 2015 and 30 September 2024, the proportion of First Nations people who have ever been on the CDP is 66 per cent. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data from 2021 found that the employment rate of First Nations people of working age (15-64) was 52 per cent in comparison to 75 per cent for non-Indigenous Australians.⁴ In 2021, employment rates for First Nations males and females are relatively similar (53 per cent and 51 per cent respectively).⁵ Across Australia in 2021 around 142,000 (29 per cent) of First Nations people aged 15-64 were employed full-time and 84,400 were employed on a part-time basis⁶.

Across the last three censuses, the proportion of First Nations people aged 15–64 who were employed was largely consistent in 2011 and 2016 (46 per cent and 47 per cent respectively), with a slight increase to 52 per cent in the 2021 census. The employment rate of First Nations people aged 25–64, increased from 51 per cent to 56 per cent between 2016 and 2021.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2024). *Rural and remote health*. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/rural-remote-australians/rural-and-remote-health>

² Jobs and Skills Australia. (2024). Regional Labour Market Indicator. Retrieved from <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/regional-labour-market-indicator#downloads>

³ Jobs and Skills Australia. (2024). Regional Labour Market Indicator. Retrieved from <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/regional-labour-market-indicator#downloads>

⁴ AIHW and National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). (2023). *Measure 2.07 Employment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-07-employment>

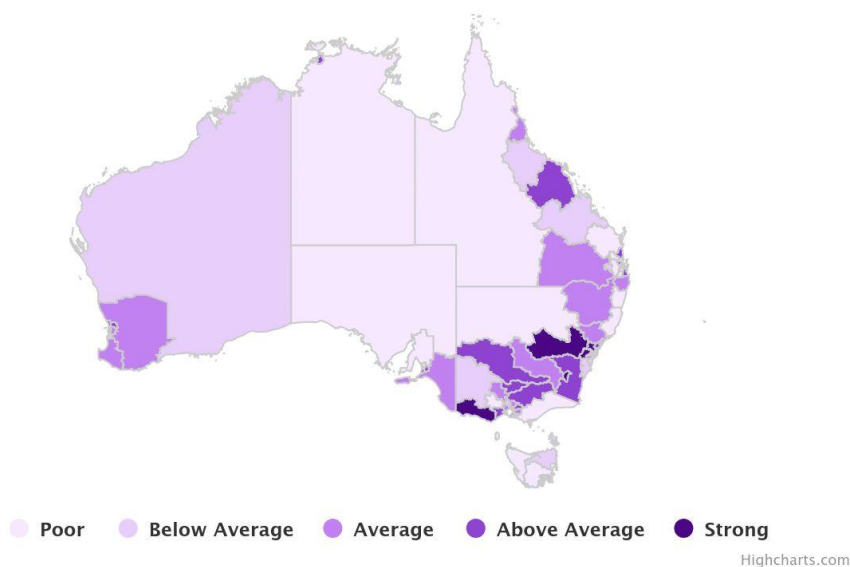
⁵ AIHW and NIAA. (2024). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework - Summary report*. P.61

⁶ AIHW and NIAA. (2023). *Measure 2.07 Employment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-07-employment>



While this data is not broken down by degree of remoteness, it is important to note that employment trends over time, particularly in remote areas are likely to be affected by changing policy objectives for remote employment programs. For example, in the 2011 Census, CDEP participants who received wages from their community were considered employed but in the 2016 Census CDP participants were not considered employed unless they had a non-CDP job. While ABS data shows there was a small increase in the unemployment rate from the 2011 Census to the 2016 Census, this data is for First Nations people nationally, not specifically remote areas so a clear connection cannot be made between CDEP ending and unemployment rates.

Figure 1: Labour Market Ratings by SA4, June 2024 – Jobs and Skills Australia.

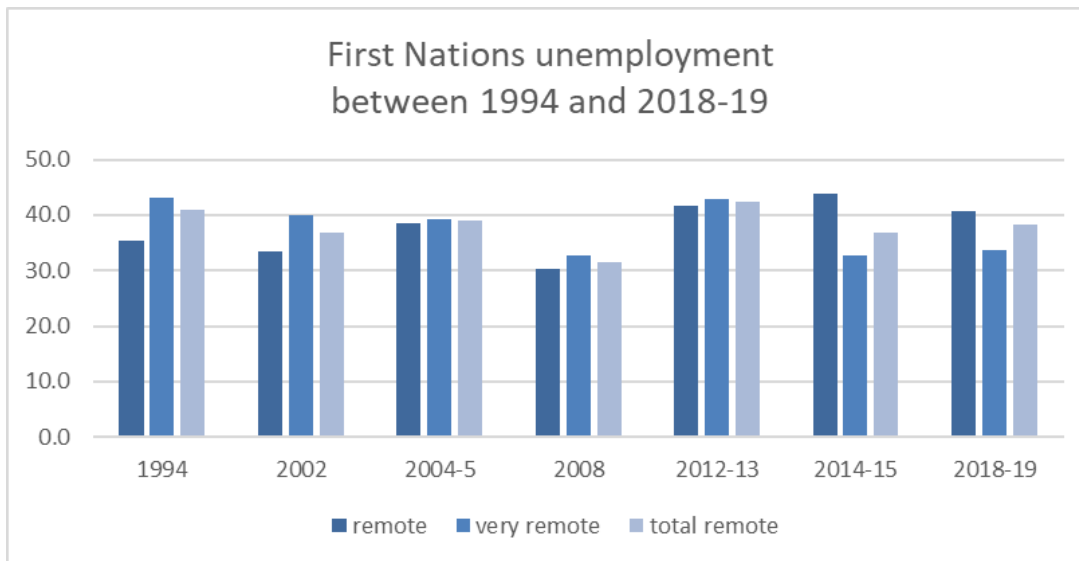


The below figure (figure 2) tracks long-term unemployment of First Nations people from 1994 through to 2018-19. It uses data from the AIHW and ABS analysis of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey 1994; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2008; Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2012–13 (2012–13 Core component); National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014–15; General Social Survey, 2014; and, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2018–19.

The data points for 1994, 2002, 2004-5, and 2008 come with the caveat that the estimates have a relative standard error between 25 and 50 per cent and given the data are from different collection methods they should be interpreted with caution. Despite these caveats it is useful to see that First Nations unemployment in remote areas is a longstanding and persistent issue that requires policy intervention.



Figure 2: First Nations unemployment between 1994 and 2018-19



The gap in employment widens with remoteness

As remoteness increases, employment status decreases. The following figures use 2021 Census data for people aged 15-64 to show a breakdown of employment (figure 3), unemployment (figure 4) and labour force participation (figure 5) rates as a percentage by remoteness and is disaggregated by First Nations and non-Indigenous people⁷.

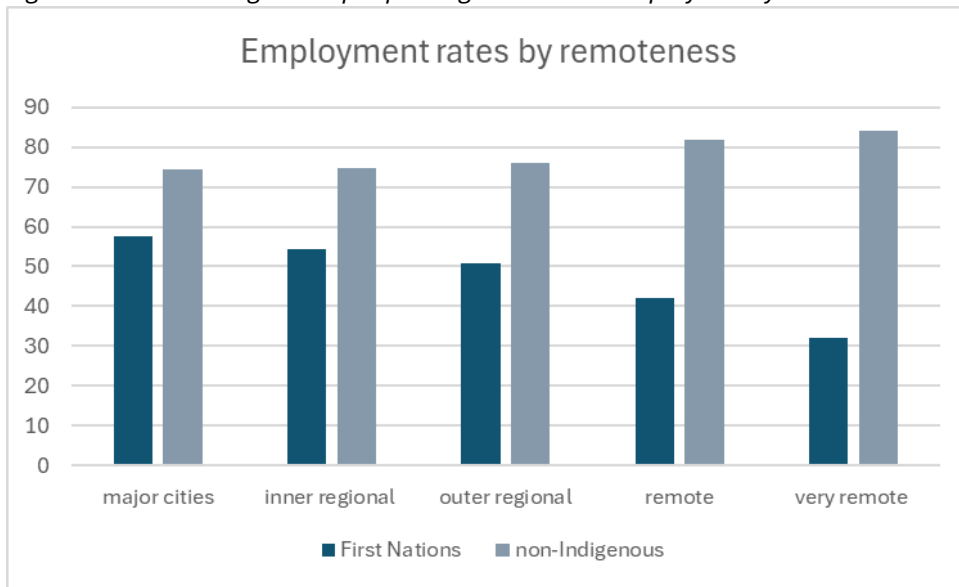
Figure 3 below shows the employment rate for First Nations people is highest in major cities and lowest in very remote areas⁸. It also shows that employment rates for non-Indigenous people are relatively similar across remoteness.

⁷ AIHW and NIAA. (2023). *Measure 2.07 Employment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-07-employment>

⁸ AIHW and NIAA. (2023). *Measure 2.07 Employment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-07-employment>



Figure 3: Percentage of people aged 15-24 employed by remoteness and First Nations status.



The employment rate, also referred to as the employment to population ratio, is the number of employed people as a proportion of the population in the specified age group.

Figure 4: Percentage of people aged 15-24 unemployed by remoteness and First Nations status.

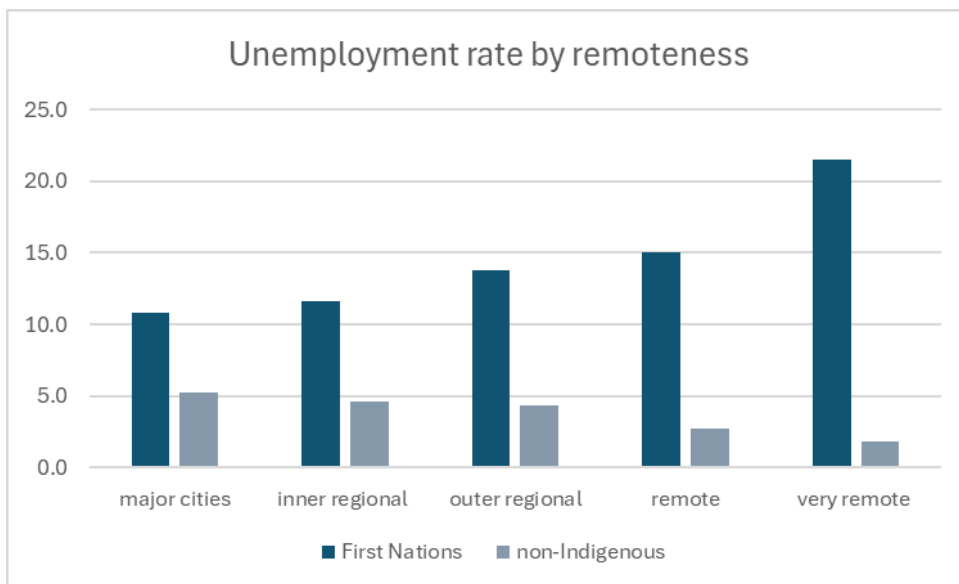
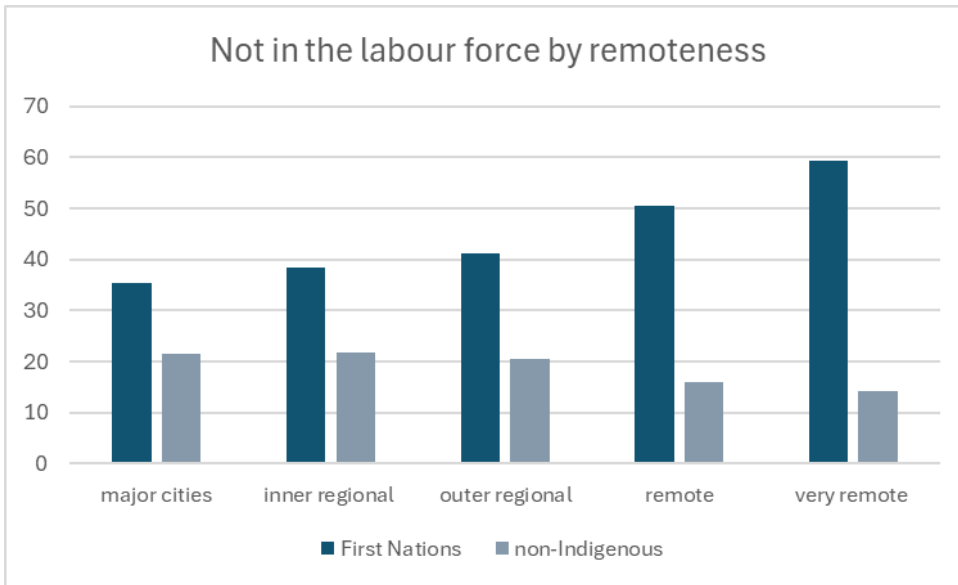


Figure 5: Percentage of people aged 15-24 not in the labour force by remoteness and First Nations status



The labour force participation rate is the number of people in the labour force as a proportion of the population in the specified age group. The labour force includes all people who have worked for at least one hour in the reference week and people without work but are available to start work and have actively sought work within the last month.

Magnitude of the problem

The CDP is the current employment service for remote job seekers. The NIAA has access to CDP data for purposes of administering the program, this includes information of the services delivered to participants and their employment outcomes.

As of 30 September 2024, there were more than 42,000 people on the CDP caseload, with a large majority of people identifying as First Nations. Women comprised just under half of all job seekers on the CDP caseload. The average age of remote job seekers is 37.5 years of age, and majority of job seekers are aged 25-54. A further breakdown of age is provided in the table below (table 1).

Table 1: CDP cohort by age.

Age	Per cent of CDP caseload (as of 30 September 2024)
Under 25	24
25-54	62
Over 55	14



There are two different methods for determining the number of CDP participants.

1. Caseload flow – this is the number of people who have come on and off the CDP over a financial year.
2. Using a point in time snapshot - for example, the last day of the month which shows the number of people on the program on that exact date.

Applying the first method, over the course of each financial year the CDP caseload has remained relatively stable since the program commenced in 2015 (from 57,746 in 2014-15 to 57,009 in 2023-24) with the proportion of participants who are long term unemployed (12 months or more) decreasing from 72.3 per cent in June 2015 to 65.8 per cent in September 2024.

Using the second method to understand the impact of the pandemic on employment, the data shows the caseload has increased by approximately 32 per cent when comparing February 2020 (pre-pandemic) with 30 September 2024 (31,920 and 42,078 respectively). This shows that while over the course of a year caseload numbers are relatively consistent, the pandemic had a significant impact on employment that is still present today.

The CDP is currently divided into 60 regions in remote and very remote Australia, including Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales (the CDP does not operate in Victoria and Tasmania). These regions cover approximately 75 per cent of Australia’s land mass. Over 1,200 communities are serviced by the CDP (as of 31 July 2024). A breakdown of the number of CDP participants by state/territory is provided in the table below (table 2).

Table 2: CDP caseload and proportion by state

State or territory	Caseload (at of 30 September 2024)	Proportion by state/territory
NSW	1,047	2.5%
NT	18,653	44.3%
QLD	8,575	20.4%
SA	2,859	6.8%
WA	10,944	26.0%
Total	42,078	100%

There are 46 CDP providers across these 60 regions delivering employment services to CDP participants. Majority of providers (n=39 / 65 per cent) are First Nations owned or local councils.



Impacts of unemployment in remote Australia

These employment rates for people in remote areas translate to impacts on a range of life outcomes including poverty, health, housing. Further, these impacts are multi-directional. For example, engagement in employment can improve mental health outcomes but poor mental health can be a barrier to employment.

Poverty

First Nations poverty rates are also the highest in remote areas (41 per cent in remote areas and 57.1 per cent in very remote areas) compared to major cities at (22.9 per cent). The degree of remoteness also has a bearing on socioeconomic inequality, including health, education, employment and housing for First Nations people.

The Productivity Commission's (the Commission) research which uses 2021 Census data, and the Indigenous Relative Socioeconomic Outcomes Index shows the average personal income for remote areas is lower than non-remote areas and there are worsening outcomes for many parts of remote Australia. This is acute in regions such as the Northern Territory, the Mount Isa area of Queensland, and the West Kimberly region in Western Australia⁹.

Health

Income and employment provide the opportunity for greater access to healthy food, appropriate housing, health services and social participation¹⁰.

The AIHW's Australia's Health 2024 report highlights that the burden of disease among First Nations people is 2.3 times that of other Australians. People living in rural and remote areas experience a greater disease burden than other Australians. Importantly, these factors compound on each other resulting in even greater inequality for First Nations people living in remote areas. For example, First Nations people living in remote areas experience a greater disease burden than First Nations people living in major cities.

Mental health

Employment is broadly a protective factor and driver for better mental health outcomes for both First Nations people and non-Indigenous people^{11 12}. Levels of mental health distress in

⁹ Productivity Commission. (2024). *Rising Inequality? A stocktake of the evidence research paper*. Retrieved from [A snapshot of inequality in Australia - Productivity Commission \(pc.gov.au\)](https://www.pc.gov.au/research/indicators/inequality)

¹⁰ AIHW & NIAA. (2023). *Measure 2.09 Income, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework website*. Retrieved from <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-08-income>

¹¹ AIHW. (2023). *Employment and unemployment*. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/employment-unemployment>

¹² AIHW. (2022). *Employment and Indigenous Mental Health*. Retrieved from [Employment and Indigenous mental health AIHW](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-mental-health/employment-and-indigenous-mental-health).



First Nations Australians who are employed are about half those of unemployed people or those outside of the labour force (21 per cent as opposed to 41 or 40 per cent respectively).¹³

Housing

Stable, appropriate and secure housing is an important factor in health and wellbeing. There is a clear gradient between remoteness and housing appropriateness. First Nations people living in remote areas have higher rates of household overcrowding than those in non-remote areas. The 2021 ABS Census data shows the proportion of First Nations people living in appropriately sized housing ranged from 88 per cent in major cities to 45 per cent in very remote areas.

Impacts on communities

Unemployment in remote areas has a significant impact on communities. Impacts vary between communities due to the uniqueness and differences between communities. Unemployment can impact communities in a range of ways including skill loss in the labour market and the flow on impacts of lower amount of funds circulating through communities.

During community consultations undertaken by the NIAA between February 2023 and June 2023, communities said there are often not enough paid jobs for everyone, and that job seekers still want opportunities to contribute to their communities and to be ready to compete for opportunities when they arise.

Unemployment in remote communities will continue to entrench poverty and disadvantage as it embeds a cycle of reliance on government support. Reliance on government support does not allow for self-determination and positive decision making. Unemployment can also impact community wellbeing and may contribute to a range of social issues. For example, financial stress caused by unemployment may affect family and community relationships.

Impacts on employers and local organisations

Without income from employment circulating through communities and going into local businesses and services, it becomes difficult to stay afloat which limits their ability to employ local job seekers.

When a fly-in-fly out workforce is relied upon, it robs small local economies' income, meaning the flow-on benefits of funded positions and services do not go back into local communities.

Barriers to employment in remote Australia

Remote Australia is geographically, culturally and economically different from other areas of Australia. People living in remote areas of Australia experience unique barriers to employment and data indicates that these are greater for First Nations people than non-Indigenous. Barriers to employment in remote Australia are complex and multi-direction. The below list of barriers has been collated from stakeholder engagement undertaken by the NIAA, CDP data held by the

¹³ AIHW. (2022). *Employment and Indigenous Mental Health*. Retrieved from [Employment and Indigenous mental health AIHW](#).



NIAA, as well as data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014-15¹⁴. The following list is high-level and non-exhaustive and remote job seekers may experience multiple barriers at once.

- Housing and overcrowding
- Limited access to education in community
- Lack of access to quality and relevant training
- Limited employment opportunities
- Workplace support required
- Limited access to supportive workplaces
- Legal issues
- Limited support services available
- Limited access to childcare
- Social isolation
- More frequent interactions with the justice system
- Geographic isolation
- Transport and driver's licence
- Language, literacy and numeracy
- Sensory communication
- Poor health
- Mental health conditions
- Digital connectivity issues
- Participation unpaid work
- Reliability limitations
- Sociocultural
- Physical limitations
- Relationships
- Substance abuse

Data from the AIHW in 2014-15 identified the main reasons for people aged 25-64 having difficulty finding work in remote areas as being¹⁵:

1. No jobs in local area or line of work
2. No jobs at all
3. Transport problems/distance
4. Insufficient education or training skills
5. Don't have driver licence

It is important to note that while this data is from the most recent National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), the data is almost ten years old. The ABS has not indicated when the next NATSISS will be undertaken¹⁶.

Thin labour markets

Markets in remote Australia are thin and in some remote areas there is no economy. Some communities serviced by the CDP have fewer than 20 CDP participants and are located in very

¹⁴ AIHW and NIAA. (2023). *2.07 Employment Data Visualisation*. Retrieved from <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-07-employment/data#DataTablesAndResources>

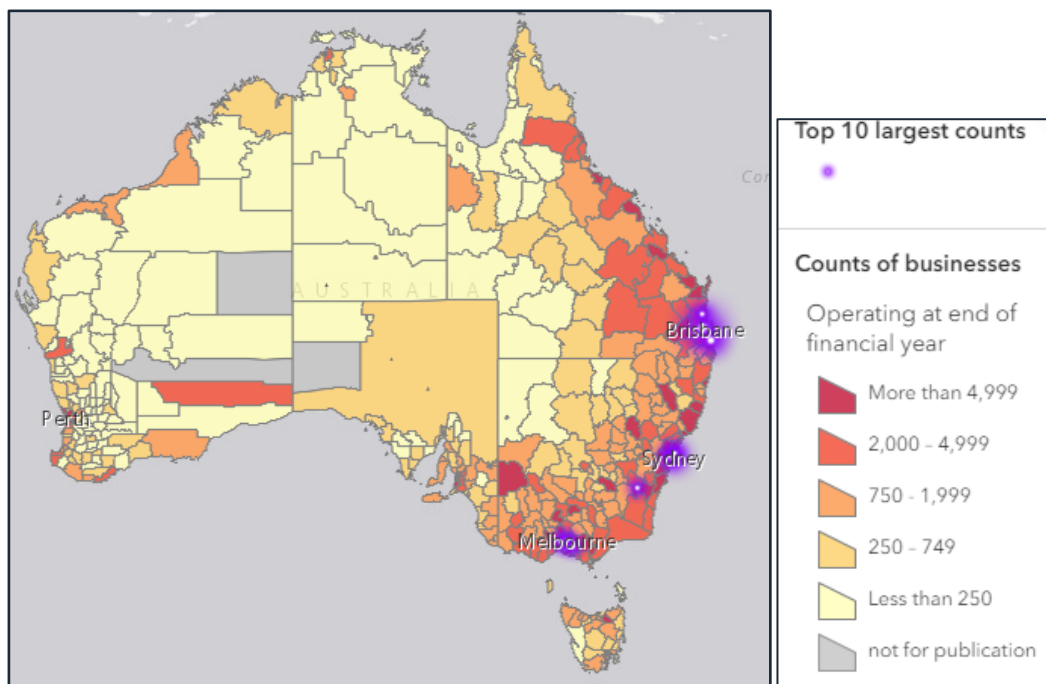
¹⁵ AIHW and NIAA. (2023). *2.07 Employment Data Visualisation*. Retrieved from <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-07-employment/data#DataTablesAndResources>

¹⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (no date). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surveys*. Retrieved from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/about/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-surveys#national-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-survey-natsiss->



isolated parts of Australia. Remote communities tend to have fewer businesses and employers and are far away from larger job markets. The 2021 Census data shows that less than 2.5 per cent of actively trading businesses are located in remote Australia. The map at figure 6 shows the counts of businesses by Local Government Area in 2022 and illustrates the thin labour markets that exist in remote areas across Australia¹⁷.

Figure 6: Counts of Australian Business December 2022



This makes labour market conditions in remote areas different to labour market conditions in a city or regional town. As the distance from larger economic markets increase, the level and diversity of opportunity decreases. In many cases, there are no readily accessible options to undertake training, learn skills and seek employment in remote communities. This is compounded by limited access to government supports and services.

Thin labour markets mean there are limited employment opportunities in remote Australia for job seekers who want to work.

Unpaid care responsibilities

A notable barrier to employment is unpaid work and care responsibilities. People living in very remote Australia are likely to participate in unpaid work and caring roles. The 2021 Census results showed that 59.5 per cent of people aged 15 years and over did unpaid domestic work; 22.2 percent of this cohort provided unpaid care for a child or multiple children; and 9.2 per

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Counts of Australian Business, Entries and Exits, 2021-22*. Retrieved from [Counts of Australian Businesses, Entries and Exits, 2021-22 \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/australian-businesses)



cent of this cohort provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, health condition or due to old age.

In 2020, First Nations women living in remote Australia were more likely to provide unpaid care compared to First Nations women living in other areas (36 per cent compared to 28 per cent) due to limited access to services, and stronger community and personal relationships. Notably, 3 out of 5 (60 per cent) of women in this cohort provided care to someone living outside of their household and two thirds (66.6 per cent) of women lived in a household with dependent children.¹⁸

The Centre for Indigenous Policy Research reported in the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* report that unpaid care work equates to about 62 per cent of First Nations women's time on average per weekday (about 15 hours a day). In an average week, it takes up 48 per cent of their time (about 11 hours a day). Spending time on unpaid care work precludes many women, especially First Nations women, from more fulsome participation in paid work (i.e. having to work reduced hours; and do casual or part time work).

The CDP has generally not been able to overcome these issues

In most cases, the CDP has not been able to overcome the high rates of unemployment and welfare reliance in remote communities. This is because employment services, cannot singlehandedly resolve thin labour market conditions. With no changes to thin remote labour markets, not everyone who would like a job is able to access one and instead must continue to rely on income support. An insufficient supply of jobs to meet demand is an ongoing problem in remote areas. Thin labour markets are unlikely to naturally resolve themselves without significant government intervention.

Unemployment is a symptom of thin labour markets but also a contributor. Without the income from stable employment coming into a community and being spent on goods and services, it is difficult for businesses to survive and in turn employ people.

Issues with the CDP

The CDP has a focus on job seeker compliance

Mutual obligations for remote job seekers are a central design feature of the CDP model and previous remote employment service models. CDP provider contracts are framed around delivering a service that supports job seekers to meet their mutual obligations through attendance at regular appointments and meeting other requirements such as attending job interviews if asked and undertaking job search (dependent on the labour market and where appropriate for the individual).

¹⁸ Australian Human Rights Commission. (2020). *Wiyi Yani U Thangani: women's voices, securing our rights, security our future* report. p35.



Noting the significant decrease in job seeker compliance action since policy changes were introduced in May 2021, work is still required to further shift the focus away from compliance towards providing support that is tailored to individual job seekers' circumstances and aspirations. A new payment for post placement support, additional outcome milestones and an improved focus on provider training will ensure that a high quality, tailored service can be provided. This will be monitored through a new provider performance framework.

The CDP has historically been criticised for having had a strong job seeker compliance focus, with many cases resulting in penalties and suspension of income support. The 2017 Senate Inquiry into the *appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of the CDP* recommended that: the Australian Government immediately replace the current CDP compliance and penalty regime with obligations that are no more onerous than those of other income support recipients.

The CDP is not effectively engaging job seekers

From 12 May 2021, changes were made to CDP mutual obligation requirements which saw participation in activities becoming voluntary for CDP participants. Since the change took effect, CDP participants have still been required to meet their mutual obligation requirements by agreeing to a job plan; attending regular appointments and job interviews; meeting job search requirements (depending on the strength of the local labour market); accepting suitable paid work when it is offered; and, not to voluntarily leave suitable employment. CDP participants can choose to undertake activities such as Work for the Dole but are not penalised if they choose not to attend voluntary activities.

Since these changes were implemented, there has been an overall decrease in non-compliance events for non-attendance at activities, with a 99 per cent reduction of financial penalties imposed on CDP participants (from around 30,000 to 12 penalties per quarter). As of 31 July 2024, there has also been an 88 per cent reduction in participant attendance in CDP activities.

When participation in activities became voluntary for CDP participants, penalties reduced, providing people with income support stability but at the same time there has been a steady decline in work-like activities provided through CDP. However, CDP activities provided communities with beneficial functions such as community maintenance, gardening, rubbish collection and construction of funeral shelters. During consultations in 2024, some communities noted that participating in community activities helped build confidence and overall well-being among residents.

Community sentiment has reflected that mutual obligations including activities should be designed in a way to assist communities, incentivise engagement in communities and provide pathways to employment without fear of penalty. Activities under the new model must be flexible and tailored to align with individual participants' goals, aspirations and capacity to help build skills needed for employment.

Currently, CDP providers can redirect around 25 per cent of their funding to work with remote communities to fund jobs through programs and services that communities identified as



needed. However, this means there are limitations on the places available for people to participate in activities. With a decreased focus on activities, engagement for those who cannot fully participate in the labour market has significantly reduced.

The CDP does not always appropriately reflect individual participant needs

The CDP has been criticised for its ‘one size fits all’ approach (community consultation). Through consultation undertaken by the NIAA in 2023 on replacing the CDP, key messages heard included:

- The current CDP arrangements fail to appropriately identify the individual needs of participants.
- Too many people are streamed into the current Work for the Dole category but, in fact, needed additional training and assistance or are unable to work within the medium-term.
- Broader work-readiness, life skills and mental health support is important for many participants. The current program often relied on referral to services that were delivered from a distance, through periodic visits or that were stretched to meet current demands.
- The CDP does not effectively focus on foundation skills, including literacy and numeracy, which can assist in building participants’ work readiness. A replacement program also needs to consider enhancing peoples’ life skills to assist them to integrate or reintegrate into the community with wrap-around services available to deliver broader work-ready, life skills, and mental health support (especially for those who have been long term unemployed).

13 and 26 -week outcomes for job placements are not flexible enough to accommodate the remote context

The CDP measures 13 and 26-week job outcomes, which is the point where a provider receives an outcome payment for a participant being placed in a job and remains continuously employed for 13 or 26 weeks and thus coming off income support. Feedback from consultation indicates the current CDP focus on full-time employment outcomes may not be the most appropriate measure of success in remote communities.

Through phase 1 of community consultation in 2023, the NIAA heard the new program needs to be flexible to support part-time, seasonal and casual work. Except for a small number of people, mostly in service-based jobs, full-time work is not a norm in many very remote communities. Remote populations are transient in nature with many people moving between different areas of Australia at different times of the year. Agriculture and pastoral work, for example, is seasonal while road, infrastructure and construction is usually time limited. In addition, any retail and extra service work is often part-time. In these circumstances, employers tend to enter casual employment contracts which do not offer long-term job security.

The number of participants who have ever been in CDP (flow caseload) during the comparison periods is stable and shows only small positive trends in measured (shorter-term) employment outcomes. Except for the caseload count below, the rest is a count of employment program



milestones (job placements and outcomes), *not the count of participants*. This means that it could be the same participants being placed in jobs more than once over the 12-month period as the nature of these jobs is unknown, for example short term seasonal work, or because people may be unable to remain in work. There is a lack of measurement of longer-term employment outcomes beyond 26 weeks, which would be beneficial for understanding longer term impacts and outcomes of program reforms.

In the last 12 months to 30 September 2024, compared to the 12 months (November 2021 to October 2022) prior to the CDP Trials commencing in November 2022:

- The flow caseload remained stable from 57,719 to 57,442.
- The number of job placements has increased by 3.8% (from 7,271 to 7,546).
- The number of 13-week job outcomes has increased by 6.3% (from 3,232 to 3,435).
- The number of 26-week job outcomes has increased by 0.3% (from 2,398 to 2,405).

The CDP IT systems are reaching end of service

The CDP IT systems have been operating for nearly 10 years. Over this time, additions to the original CDP infrastructure have continued to be made on an ad-hoc basis. The IT system used by CDP providers is reaching the end of service. Training materials (including operational guidance) are dense, and there is a lack of appropriate support and resources to support new staff working in CDP provider organisations.

Consequences of inaction

If action is not taken to replace the CDP with programs that aim to address thin market conditions in remote areas and provide a higher quality employment service, remote job seekers will continue to be reliant on income support payments. Without improvements in employment opportunities and outcomes, job seekers will continue to be limited in experiencing the benefits of employment such as improved health and mental health, higher standard of living, and the ability to provide for others. Disadvantage cycles may continue to be entrenched unless there is intervention to act as a circuit breaker.

Further, remote communities would continue to be heavily reliant on a fly-in-fly-out and drive-in-drive-out workforce.

While the remote employment programs are not First Nations specific, inaction will contribute to limiting the Government's ability to meet the objectives of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement), particularly:

- Target 8: by 2031 increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62 per cent.
- Outcome 8: Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

The objective of the National Agreement is to overcome the entrenched inequality faced by too many First Nations people so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians. There are 19



national socio-economic targets across areas that have an impact on life outcomes for First Nations people.



2. What are the objectives, why is government intervention needed to achieve them, and how will success be measured?

Why Government intervention is necessary

Thin labour markets in remote areas are unlikely to change without government investment

There are limited economic markets and commercial opportunities in remote Australia and in some very remote areas (for example Homelands) there is no economy. As the distance from larger economic markets increase, the level and diversity of opportunity decreases. Thin labour markets are unlikely to naturally resolve themselves in remote locations where set-up and operating costs are high, operation revenue often uncertain, and businesses and organisations are unlikely to feel confident establishing themselves or expanding their business without confidence that there is strong financial viability in the region.

Address social and economic inequalities in remote Australia

In many parts of remote Australia limited economic opportunities have led to inequitable outcomes for remote job seekers and other impacted stakeholders including communities, local employers and organisations. Without Government action (or maintaining the status quo), there is a continuing risk of inequitable socio-economic outcomes for Australians living in remote areas. All Australians, regardless of where they live should have access to economic opportunities. In remote Australia, this means access to jobs and the social and economic benefits to wellbeing which stem from this.

The Government is not on track to meet Closing the Gap Target 7 under the National Agreement (i.e. By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67 per cent). The Government is also not on track to meet Closing the Gap Target 8 in the Northern Territory where a high proportion of First Nations people live in remote communities and are unemployed (i.e. By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62 per cent).

There is a fiscal incentive for Government when income support recipients move off welfare and into genuine paid employment, given those in paid employment pay taxes and have the capacity to invest in their own future through superannuation, housing, education and healthcare. People earning an income generally experience higher socio-economic status than what they would otherwise receive on income support.



Contribute to Australia's International commitments

The Government is required to provide an employment service to all people in receipt of an income support payment. Further, Australia has also committed to improving the economic circumstances of people, including First Nations people through several international instruments including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, signed in 2009, which outlines Indigenous peoples right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing sanitation, health and social security.¹⁹

Similarly, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognises peoples' right to work and the opportunity to gain a living by work, and that States will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right. This includes the right to favourable conditions of work ensuring remuneration, which provides workers with fair wages and a decent living for themselves and their families. ICESCR was ratified by Australia in 1975.²⁰

In summary, remote communities are heavily reliant on government involvement in the labour market and provides funding for a range of services that employ people. Given the fact that there has been insignificant change in unemployment rates in remote communities as outlined in chapter one, there is ultimately no viable alternative to Government action.

Goals of addressing unemployment in remote Australia

The Government's commitment to a new policy approach in remote Australia that is focused on real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions will assist income support recipients in remote Australia to move into paid employment.

A key goal of designing a program that helps to address unemployment in remote Australia is to ensure it adequately address the challenges job seekers experience in obtaining employment in remote Australia. It is also important that the programs not only generate employment opportunities and increase employment rates but also that these jobs are meaningful and support broader economic development.

The goals of addressing the issue of unemployment in remote Australia is to reduce income inequality, increase economic empowerment and self-determination of individual job seekers as well as communities. Addressing unemployment aims to reduce disadvantage of people in remote Australia as well as reducing reliance on income support. As mentioned above, employment is closely associated with a range of health and socioeconomic factors. Improving employment rates in remote Australia aims to make contribution to positive outcomes associated with employment such as improvements in health, housing, mental health and housing.

¹⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission. (AHRC). (no date). Retrieved from: humanrights.gov.au

²⁰ AHRC. (no date). Retrieved from: humanrights.gov.au



Barriers to government action and attempts to overcome these

Long-term and sustainable change requests efforts across government and the private sector

Long-term, transformative change to employment and economies in remote Australia cannot be delivered through Government investment alone, nor is that sustainable. The creation of jobs in remote Australia is an important way to help job seekers to build skills and experience to participate in the economy. This will contribute to remote economic development directly, and a larger remote workforce will help attract more private investment. But workforce development is only one element of economic development and is not intended to be the only solution to close the gap in employment in remote regions. Rather, pragmatic actions and solutions from all levels of government and the private sector will combine to create momentum.

A range of initiatives are underway seeking to boost remote economic development, many with a focus on the economic self-determination of First Nations people. These include the Strengthening Rural Communities grant program run by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, and the delivery of training hubs in remote communities around Alice Springs by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. These align with strategic work underway on the Care and Support Economy within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

While this progress is positive, the challenge of bringing economic development to the thin markets of remote Australia will need more to unlock sustainable pipelines of jobs, including those delivering Government services, to complement jobs created.

The NIAA is consulting across Government on ways to develop remote employment opportunities in a range of sectors. As a priority, the NIAA is working with the National Disability Insurance Agency, Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) and Department of Social Services (DSS) to develop options to connect participants of remote employment services to service delivery jobs funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). NDIS data suggests the NDIS may be able to support 3,000 new disability support jobs within CDP regions, many requiring low or no skills. This would support new jobs in remote communities, including for First Nations people, and address unmet demand for culturally appropriate care services across remote Australia – by drawing on funding already allocated through the NDIS.

The NIAA will continue to work across other portfolios to identify and support remote employment opportunities. Responsibility to deliver on these opportunities rests with relevant Ministers and Departments. The objective is not to exhaustively map and drive existing and potential measures, but to take practical steps to understand the range of possible measures – and connect them to the tools we have in remote Australia, including the RJED program and remote employment services.



The CDP is not meeting all stakeholder expectations

The CDP is not meeting the expectations of all communities. Hence, the Government's commitment to a new program in remote Australia with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions.

The CDP has been criticised for being a top-down approach and too centrally controlled by government systems and decision making. As part of initial consultations that took place with communities from February 2023 – June 2023, communities said that insufficient effort has been directed at creating jobs through community-based organisations, and through community-led approaches. Communities also said they have less control and ability to participate in local decision-making processes to determine workforce/community priorities, and fewer resources to support participants into jobs, targeted training or other employment initiatives. They also identified a missed opportunity in creating jobs that are culturally valued, as there is considerable amount of work being done in communities that is not recognised through mainstream employment.

In March 2024, the former minister, the Hon Linda Burney, announced the establishment of the [First Nations Reference Group](#) (FNRG) to reinforce the Government's commitment to work in partnership with First Nations peoples. The FNRG members are economic development experts from across remote Australia, including from peak organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business leaders, training providers, partnerships, authorities and governing bodies. The FNRG are working with the Government to provide advice on the design and implementation of the two complementary programs to replace the CDP.

Goals of the two complementary programs

The Australian Government has committed to reform remote employment by replacing the CDP in two stages. The first stage is the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program, and the second stage is a new remote employment service.

The second stage of the reform is the design and delivery of a new remote employment service. This will support people who are not job-ready, or who are unable to be placed in a job right away, with the skills and resources they need. CDP services will continue and Government will work to ensure a smooth transition between programs..

While neither the RJED program nor the new remote employment service are exclusively for First Nations people, they are both being developed in partnership with First Nations people to increase their success to contribute to closing the gap in First Nations employment.

The Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program

In February 2024, the Australian Government announced that it would invest \$707 million to deliver a new Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program. This is the first stage in replacing the Community Development Program (CDP). The new program will provide people in remote communities with meaningful jobs with fair pay and conditions.



The RJED program will initially fund 3,000 jobs gradually over three years, starting in the second half of 2024. It will support job seekers currently participating in, or eligible for, CDP to move into employment.

A \$185 million Community Jobs and Business Fund (CJBF) is an important element of the RJED program and responds to what communities have asked for. As part of this fund, community organisations can identify jobs and projects the community needs, and when applying for jobs, are also able to apply for funding of minor capital work and equipment.

The design of the RJED has been informed by advice from a First Nations Reference Group and feedback from consultation with remote communities and key stakeholders. The objectives of the RJED program are to:

- Create 3,000 new jobs over three years.
- Assist income support recipients to move into paid employment.
- Create jobs that are meaningful and valued by communities.
- Increase local employment in remote communities, helping to meet Closing the Gap socioeconomic targets for youth and adult employment.
- Increase incomes and reduce poverty in remote communities.
- Contribute to long-term economic, social and cultural development of communities.

New remote employment service

With broader reforms to employment services to occur, as set out in the Australian Government Response to the House of Representatives Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services, the new remote employment service will take a phased approach to create a pathway towards consistent and coherent approaches to employment servicing across the employment services system as a whole.

The new remote employment service will take a phased approach as a pathway to longer term reform. The new remote employment service will be implemented to replace the CDP and complement the RJED program. The new remote employment service will support people who are not job-ready, or who are unable to be placed in a job right away, with the skills and resources they need. The CDP will continue to operate and Government will work to ensure a smooth transition between programs.

The new remote employment service will help to address barriers to employment that have been faced for many years, including training and skill development opportunities, and link participants with suitable employment opportunities, including those created through the RJED program.

The proposed objectives of the new remote employment service are to:

- Transition the approximately 42,000 CDP participants to the new remote employment service.
- Execute all new provider contracts.



- Undertake new assessments for all participants of the new remote employment service.
- Deliver a case-management style service that is flexible to individual job readiness and circumstances.
- Build local workforce skills to increase local employment in remote communities.
- Increase the capability of providers.

What will make the policy a success?

Achieving the above objectives will contribute to broader outcomes and impact remote communities in a range of ways such as: local workforce development; increased employment of youth; local people engaged in meaningful and culturally appropriate work; increased income and reduced reliance on income support; new or expanded programs and services in remote communities; improved capacity of community organisations as employers; economic participation of local people in remote communities; individual self-reliance and empowerment; and, local economic development.

Success of these policies is based on the following assumptions:

- Sufficient Government investment to cover departmental administration and program funding for the RJED program and a new remote employment service.
- The NIAA and other relevant departments and agencies have sufficient resourcing with the skills and capability to implement and operate two programs of this scale.
- There is effective communication between the NIAA and external relevant departments and agencies, and they provide their elements in a timely manner and to a high degree of quality.
- No major changes in scope to the programs, for example:
 - no unanticipated impacts on delivery (e.g. legal, political), for example Caretaker Conventions may impact on the type of program decisions that can be made, and
 - there continues to be community support and consultation for replacing the CDP.

Does the Government have the capacity to solve the problem?

The Government has demonstrated its ability to deliver this reform given it is currently delivering the CDP and a range of trials underway. However, to deliver both a new remote employment service and the RJED program, additional efforts including an internal capability uplift of the NIAA regional offices and national office program and grants areas to deliver the program through a grants process in the necessary compressed timeframes. This resourcing will address the risk that the NIAA does not currently have the required resourcing to deliver a program of this scale in the required timeframes.



Informed by trials

The Government has been trialling new and innovative approaches to remote employment to learn what works well and what does not, to inform the new program and give Government the best chance of achieving success. Trialling different approaches to remote jobs has yielded some key learnings from across the trials such as: the importance of flexible work arrangements; the need to get eligibility right to ensure broad participation; and the critical need for the program to be designed and implemented in close partnership with remote communities.

There are three different trials underway:

- The CDP Trials
- The New Jobs Program Trial
- Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trial

As part of the Remote Employment Roundtable on 31 August 2022, the former Minister announced CDP providers could opt-in to vary their agreements to redirect 25 per cent of funds to trial new approaches within targeted CDP regions. This was an important first step in moving away from delivering work-like activities to supporting job seekers into real jobs. The CDP Trials commenced in November 2022 to provide flexibility to fund jobs through programs and services that communities identified as needed. The CDP Trial comprises 136 projects across 57 CDP regions and since commencing, over 2,300 CDP participants have been placed into jobs and overall CDP job placements have increased by 11 per cent. There will be opportunities to continue some of these approaches through to 30 June 2025.

The 2022-23 Budget also provided funding to trial an additional 200 new remote jobs under the New Jobs Program Trial in a limited number of CDP locations; this was subsequently increased to 300 jobs in the 2024-25 Budget. The trial has allowed for community-controlled organisations and local government to identify local jobs and receive funding for wages and capital.

On 1 July 2023 the Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trial commenced to trial new approaches to remote employment services, to test ideas and understand barriers to employment in very remote communities that are a significant distance from a regional centre.

Through the trials, Government has gathered lessons, insights and evidence about what is working in remote employment settings, which is being incorporated into the policy, implementation and evaluation design for the RJED program and a new remote employment service.

Further information on the trials is at [Appendix A](#).

Alternatives to Government action

Thin or non-existent labour markets, and unique socio-economic conditions that are present in many parts of remote Australia have led to inefficient and inequitable outcomes. Ultimately, there is no viable alternative to Government action. There are limited economic markets and commercial opportunities in remote Australia and in some remote areas there is no economy.



As the distance from larger economic markets increase, the level and diversity of opportunity decreases.

Government investment in 3,000 real jobs is a first step to support income support recipients move into paid employment. Government investment will ensure a more capable and skilled-up workforce, which in turn may attract further investment in employment activity from the private or non-government sectors overtime. Government investment is essential to driving economic development and improving a range of socio-economic indicators for job seekers in remote Australia, and in line with the national and inter-governmental commitment to Closing the Gap on employment.



3. What policy options are you considering?

This chapter explores the options for addressing the policy problem as outlined in chapter 2.

Context for the options considered

The Government made an election commitment to reform remote employment by replacing the CDP in two stages. On 31 August 2022 former Minister Burney hosted the Remote Employment Roundtable (ahead of the Jobs and Skills Summit on 1–2 September 2022), as a first step towards a new program.

The first stage announced in February 2024, is the new Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program set to start from September 2024, initially funding the creation 3,000 new jobs to be phased in over three years. These will be real jobs, with proper wages and decent conditions, designed and implemented in partnership with First Nations people. The second stage of the reform is the design and delivery of a new remote employment service. This will support people who are not job-ready, or who are unable to be placed in a job right away, with the skills and resources they need.

3.1 Option 1 – Status Quo

The status quo option is to continue to deliver the CDP as the employment service for remote job seekers. The CDP would continue in its current state which does not use an intensive case-management approach and relies on the existing policy design and supports. The status quo would continue to operate within the thin labour markets as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. Under the status quo option, CDP participants will continue to be required to meet mutual obligation requirements in return for income support by agreeing to a Job Plan which includes:

- attending regular appointments and job interviews
- meeting job search requirements (depending on the strength of the local labour market)
- accepting suitable paid work when it is offered, and
- not to voluntarily leave suitable employment.

Participation in activities such as Work for the Dole will continue to be voluntary under the status quo option. As noted in Chapter 1, since activities became voluntary in May 2021, there has been an 88 per cent reduction in participant attendance in CDP activities (as of 31 July 2024). Having basic reciprocal arrangements, can help encourage job seekers receiving income support payments to actively look for work and undertake initiatives that will either lead to a temporary job or improve their prospects in obtaining one in the longer term. Where a job seeker fails to meet their mutual obligations, they may be subject to a financial penalty or



suspension of income support payment – but this is normally a last resort as CDP providers are required to work with a participant to support and encourage program participation and compliance.

With no changes to encourage engagement under the status quo, it is expected that CDP participants would continue to opt-out of participation in activities and not participate in skill building or training opportunities.

3.2 Option 2 – Replace the CDP with two complementary programs: the Remote Jobs and Economic Development program and a new remote employment service

The Australian Government has committed to reform remote employment by replacing the CDP) in two stages.

Stage 1: Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program

The first stage, announced in February 2024, is the new Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program set to commence in late 2024 following a design period with a First Nations Reference Group, remote communities and other key stakeholders.

The \$707 million RJED program will initially fund 3,000 new jobs to be phased in over three years. It will support people in remote communities to move into meaningful jobs that communities want, with fair pay and conditions. The meaningful aspect of jobs is important as people may be more likely to take up and remain in jobs if they feel like they are doing something important to them and valuable. Jobs will be flexible to reflect community and participant needs.

The RJED program aims to directly address the lack of jobs available in remote Australia due to thin labour markets as outlined in chapters 1 and 2. The RJED program is about creating real jobs that communities want, supported by employment services.

It will support job seekers currently participating in, or eligible for, CDP (or the new remote employment service once it commences) to move into employment by funding meaningful jobs that communities want. Eligible organisations in CDP regions will be funded to create new jobs to employ local eligible job seekers at the appropriate award rate or the National Minimum Wage (whichever is applicable) plus relevant conditions, such as superannuation and leave.

Interested job seekers will be supported by their local remote employment service provider to get them ready to work – like training, help with job applications and getting a tax file number. Job seekers in CDP regions will be able to build their skills and experience through the RJED program, creating more pathways to sustainable and suitable job opportunities in the future. There will also be a focus on youth to improve their employment opportunities once they have finished school.



The RJED program will support a mix of full time, part time or casual jobs to meet the needs and preferences of both employers and employees. Participants will need to declare income earned to Centrelink and their income support payments may decrease.

A \$185 million CJBF is an important element of the new program and responds to what communities have overwhelmingly asked for. The purpose of the CJBF is to provide funding for capital, equipment, employee support and capacity building services for eligible organisations to complement wages so those employed in a job funded under the RJED program have the resources needed to do their job. Organisations applying for funding through the CJBF will need to outline in their grant application how the capital, equipment, employee support and/or capacity building services being sought have a clear, direct and proportional link to jobs created under the RJED program.

Where participants move from an RJED job to another job, the funding will stay available for the RJED employer to employ someone else from the remote employment services caseload, as per the terms of the grant funding agreement.

It's important to note that the RJED program is aimed at supporting people into jobs and lifting their skills and experience so they can move out of the program into a long term, permanent job. The economic development aspect of the new program aims to increase economic opportunities in remote communities and generate long term permanent jobs. For example, by localising jobs under fly-in fly-out programs and service delivery and by generating jobs in the community service, infrastructure and resource sectors.

Acknowledging that each community is different, the new program will take a place-based approach by supporting different employment opportunities in every place. The RJED program will be designed with flexibility to consider local conditions – so it works at a community scale. There will be multiple grant rounds over the three years as some communities may be ready to identify jobs immediately, while others will need more time.

[Grant funding for local organisations to create jobs](#)

RJED employers, the organisations receiving grant funding under the RJED program, will create jobs that deliver services the local community wants and needs. Eligible organisations will apply for funding to employ local job seekers. As part of this, they may apply for funding under the CJBF to purchase equipment and resources to make these jobs a reality. Grant Opportunity Guidelines will be published online and will include eligibility criteria for the RJED program.

RJED employers will work with the local remote employment services provider to prepare and support job seekers into paid employment. The remote employment service provider will assist RJED employers to train, mentor and retain their employees. Employees in a RJED funded job receive on-the-job training, mentoring and upskilling and work in culturally safe workplaces with fair pay and conditions.

To ensure there is an equitable distribution of RJED jobs, a regional allocation methodology has been developed. Regional allocation will be based on NIAA regions, with allocation weightings based on CDP caseload numbers – refer to the table below (table 3) for the proposed regional



allocations. If the entire job allocation for a region is not required for that region, available jobs may be re-allocated to other regions.

Table 3: Proposed regional allocations for the RJED program

NIAA Region	2024-25 proposed No. of jobs distribution	2025-26 proposed No. of jobs distribution	2026-27 proposed No. of jobs distribution	Proposed Distribution of 3000 Jobs
Arnhem Land & Groote Eylandt	130	145	145	419
Central Australia	119	133	133	385
Greater Western Australia	142	158	158	458
Kimberley	98	109	109	315
North Queensland	170	190	190	549
South Australia	62	69	69	200
South Queensland	18	20	20	58
Top End & Tiwi Islands	168	187	187	541

Investment in the RJED program

As part of the 2024-25 Budget, the Government committed \$777.4 million over five years from 2023-24 (and \$255.5 million per year ongoing) to establish the RJED program, which will create 3,000 jobs in remote Australia and assist income support recipients to move into paid employment. Funding includes:

- \$536.1 million over five years from 2023-24 (and \$194.3 million per year ongoing) to fund the creation of 3,000 jobs in remote Australia, through a phased roll out over three years from 2024-25.
- \$185 million over four years from 2024 – 25 (and 61.2 million per year ongoing) for a CJBF, to support community development and the creation of employment opportunities through funding equipment, capacity building and infrastructure.
- \$45.5 million over three years from 2024-25 to extend the current CDP from 31 October 2024 to 30 June 2025, when a new remote employment services program will replace the current CDP provider arrangements, to provide supplementary funding to support the increased caseload following impacts of COVID-19, and to provide continuity of support to participants who are not job-ready or able to commence employment under the RJED program.
- \$7.1 million over two years from 2023-24 to increase the number of jobs funded under the New Jobs Program Trial to 300, to support the current demand until the RJED program commences.

Stage two: a new remote employment service

The second stage of the reform is a new remote employment service as not everyone will be ready to go into a job or may require other support services. The new remote employment service will include a transition period which will focus on developing the workforce to be ready



for jobs – either through the RJED program or elsewhere. The new remote employment service is being designed in parallel to broader reform related work across Government including the [Employment White Paper](#), the [Inquiry into Workforce Australia Employment Services](#), reforms to [Disability Employment Services](#) and work of the [Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee](#).

CDP provider services will continue to operate and Government will work to ensure a smooth transition between programs. This will allow time for the new remote employment service to be designed, the grant process to be undertaken, contracts to be signed to enable the service to commence.

Current CDP providers and future remote employment service providers will support job seekers to find employment and/or support job seekers to address barriers to employment opportunities. Providers will be responsible for connecting people who are job-ready with suitable job opportunities, including jobs through the RJED program. Providers will also support people who are not job-ready with the skills and resources they need.

In 2023 and 2024, the NIAA undertook extensive consultations with organisations, individuals, and businesses across the 60 CDP regions on what they needed in a new remote employment program. The NIAA also worked with providers to initiate trials across a number of CDP sites to find out what might work to increase job seeker engagement in a remote employment service program and support the economic development of their communities.

The outcomes from these consultations, and trials, clearly showed that communities want a new remote employment service that:

- is flexible, user centric and culturally appropriate and safe for job seekers
- provides meaningful ways to engage in community that individuals need, and communities want and prioritises participant engagement ahead of compliance, and
- supports job seekers in remote Australia to build the skills, confidence, and knowledge they need to move into paid employment.

New remote employment service arrangements

The new remote employment service will replace the CDP in remote Australia . The new remote employment service will operate in existing CDP regions which cover 75 percent of Australia’s land mass including over 1,200 remote communities. It will service around 42,000 remote job seekers (participants) through support that is tailored to individual goals, barriers, needs and proximity to the labour market.

The NIAA anticipate at least one provider per remote employment services region. There are currently 60 remote employment services regions and 46 CDP providers. In some regions, there are multiple CDP providers who service specific footprint within a CDP region and some providers who deliver services to multiple CDP regions. The exact number of providers will be determined through the assessment of the provider selection process.

A grant process will be undertaken to select new remote employment service providers, so arrangements are in place before the CDP ends to ensure there is a service available to all remote job seekers with no disruptions.



The new remote employment service will help address barriers to employment and link participants with suitable employment opportunities, including those created through the RJED program.

With a strong focus on local, place-based initiatives, the new remote employment service will provide value through community projects, social enterprise and participant centred service offerings. It will also provide the opportunity for innovative approaches to employment in remote Australia to be strengthened, harnessing the successes and learnings of effective community-led projects.

Updated assessments for all job seekers on the caseload will be a key design feature of the new remote employment service given it is a necessary pathway step to longer term reform in line with the Government response to the Senate Inquiry into Workforce Australia employment services.

Mutual obligations under the new remote employment service

Recommendations made in the House of Representatives Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services call for large scale reform to fundamentally rebuild the Australian Government's employment services system, including mutual obligations that are appropriate to individual circumstances.

In its response to the Select Committee, the Government agreed there is a need for more flexible mutual obligations that better align with the lived realities of people and encourage meaningful participation. It has signalled the need for mutual obligations that are fit for purpose and create pathways to sustainable work, appropriate to an individual's distance from the labour market as well as to local labour market conditions and opportunities.

During NIAA's consultation on replacing the CDP in 2023 and 2024, a consistent message was that a new remote employment service should include something fair and meaningful for job seekers to do in return for income support. More meaningful support and engagement in activities that genuinely help job seekers on their pathway to work will be an element of employment services reform in line with the Australian Government response to the Senate Inquiry into Workforce Australia employment services and will be designed to assist individuals to get the most out of the system and support them into work.

Under the new remote employment service, there will be no changes to current mutual obligation or compliance settings. Participants will continue to be required to regularly engage with their provider. Participation in activities will remain voluntary, however, there will be a strengthened focus on engagement to encourage participation in meaningful activities. The new remote employment service will focus on participants' skills, strengths and abilities, allow individuals to participate in meaningful community-based activities designed in close consultation with communities, and provide access to employment opportunities.

Principles for the design of the new remote employment service

While the new remote employment service is still in a design phase, at a high level it will:

- accept the distinction of remote labour markets





- build on pilots & innovative approaches
- signal alignment with future employment services reform
- be community-driven
- improve assessment models
- encourage quality provider servicing
- deliver meaningful pathways to work
- help to address existing inequities across boundaries
- not require legislative change and significant IT investment, and
- involve effective grants processes to support providers in applying to deliver services.



3.3 Comparison of the CDP and the new remote employment service

Table 4: Comparison of the CDP and the new remote employment service

<p>The CDP</p>  <p>CDP participant</p>	<p>The new remote employment service</p>  <p>New remote employment service Job Seeker</p>
<p>A flexible program that can be tailored to meet community and job seeker needs with broad deliverables.</p>	<p>A job seeker centric flexible program that can be tailored to deliver community and job seeker needs, with clear and specified minimum deliverables.</p>
<p>A large CDP Provider Operational Guidance (manual) which broadly captures service delivery expectations and online processes. Changes in the CDP have resulted in a gradual decrease in NIAA support and provider support resources.</p>	<p>Informed providers supported by comprehensive and streamlined service delivery resources.</p>
<p>Current payment model limits provider performance management.</p>	<p>A payment model which ensures funding is attributed to key deliverables to support quality service provision (including post placement support services) and performance management, with consideration of caseload, remoteness and community priorities.</p>
<p>Caseload management is flexible but broadly defined without minimum deliverables so it can be subject to interpretation by providers.</p>	<p>A job seeker centric service model requiring increased length of engagements between providers and participants to deliver quality tailored support for the job seeker, including increased numeracy and literacy support.</p>



<p>CDP Trials have shown good success with engagement and participation, particularly where it was linked to employment. CDP Trials have successfully supported social enterprise; however, there has been no clear management requirements of sales/income or testing of feasibility.</p>	<p>Establishment of a flexible Community Project Fund managed by providers in close consultation or co-designed with communities to support enterprise development, local industry development and other community initiatives to continue building successes from the CDP Trials.</p>
<p>Activities that generate income are generally well attended activities, offer incentives to job seekers through sharing of profits, and providers are paid to provide administration, however there is no re-investment back into the activity or progression into a social enterprise if possible.</p>	<p>Review of social enterprises and income generating participation projects to ensure administration costs to providers and incentives remain. Includes re-investment to support growth, including financial literacy for enterprises.</p>
<p>Initial investment in provider capability when CDP commenced in 2015, with moderate further investment subsequently.</p>	<p>Provider capability building through increased NIAA resourcing and continued investment in Workforce Development and Strategic Planning.</p>
<p>The introduction of voluntary participation as part of mutual obligations while reducing financial penalties, has led to a disengaged job seeker caseload.</p>	<p>The new remote employment service will maintain the status quo for mutual obligation requirements for participants with a focus on engagement ahead of compliance to encourage participation in meaningful activities that are tailored to individual needs and support people on their pathway to work.</p>



4. What is the likely net benefit of each option?

This Chapter presents a net benefit analysis of the two options considered using a multi-criteria analysis to define the net benefit to impacted stakeholders. As outlined in Chapter 3, the two proposed options are:

- **Option 1** is the ‘status quo’ option in which existing remote employment service supports (the CDP) for job seekers in remote and very remote Australia are relied on, with no further investment in jobs or change in expectation from the Australian Government.
- **Option 2** is to replace the CDP with two complementary programs – a Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program to invest in real jobs in remote Australia and a new remote employment service that is tailored to individual circumstances, aspirations and job-readiness.

Net Benefit Analysis

What is the overall net benefit of assessment for the options?

The multi criteria analysis on the following pages examines the relative benefits of each option. Given the degree of difficulty attached to determining a precise quantitative value, a simple scale ranging from -3 to +3 (with 0 representing no net change in benefit) has been chosen to illustrate and compare the relative benefits of each of the two options in relation to specific cohorts.

Criteria for measuring the highest net benefit for each option

To determine the highest net benefit out of the two options, this impact analysis adopts a ‘multi-criteria analysis’ (MCA),²¹ and is complemented by a quantitative analysis to determine the Regulatory Burden Estimate²² at the recommendation of the Office of Impact Analysis (OIA). MCA is a type of analysis that can be used when it is not feasible to quantify or monetise the main impacts of options.

While there is data available from range of trials, this has primarily been used to understand the qualitative impacts of job creation and not extrapolated for quantitative analysis. This is because the trials utilise the CDP whereas this impact analysis is assessing the RJED program together with the complementary new remote employment service which is expected to provide more tailored support than the current CDP. This

²² The [OIA’s Regulatory Burden Measurement Framework](#) requires Government agencies submitting an impact analysis to calculate the annual impact of regulatory costs and benefits associated with the options proposed. The prescribed calculation methods are provided by OIA under this framework, which are then used to summarise the overall impact as the Regulatory Burden Estimate (RBE).



MCA also incorporates feedback provided from stakeholders through community consultation as well as the online consultation opportunities.

MCA is able to be used when the objectives and their importance can be defined as a basis for comparing options. MCA can include a wide range of criteria (for example, impacted stakeholders, social and environmental considerations), all measured in the most relevant unit as opposed to monetary values. This may mean that more criteria can be incorporated than would be the case with a quantitative analysis.

To understand how these policies would impact stakeholders at an individual and community level, this MCA considers the highest net benefit of each option's policy parameters and objectives on the following stakeholders:

- remote job seekers
- remote job seekers – youth
- local employers
- remote employment service providers
- remote communities
- community-controlled organisations, and
- local councils.

The average rating for the individual impacts is summarised in the below table (table 5). The ratings are based on the experiences of jobseekers under the current CDP framework (Option 1) and the expected net benefits to jobseekers in remote Australia should Option 2 be implemented.

Public consultations with over 300 remote communities have signaled that a change is needed, and that the program should:

- be planned and led by community
- support more local jobs for local people
- recognise roles done in community including a new approach for youth
- provide support for people who cannot work right now, and
- be flexible to invest in local priorities.

In response to this feedback, between November 2022 and June 2023, CDP providers were able to re-direct around 25 per cent of their funding to work with remote communities and trial new approaches to securing real jobs for participants. The trials provided an opportunity to better understand how people receiving unemployment benefits in remote parts of Australia can be supported into work. Around two thirds of participating CDP providers reported that their approaches received a greater level of community support than before.

Over 5,500 CDP participants benefitted in some way from the trial approaches (at an average cost of around \$4,700 per beneficiary). Of these, over 1,300 participants attained paid work opportunities. Compared with the same period twelve months prior (that is, November 2021 – June 2022), there were 4.3 per cent more job placements during the Trialling Pathways to Real Jobs initiative. Higher placements were driven by increases in services industries and in non-routine manual occupations. The largest increases in

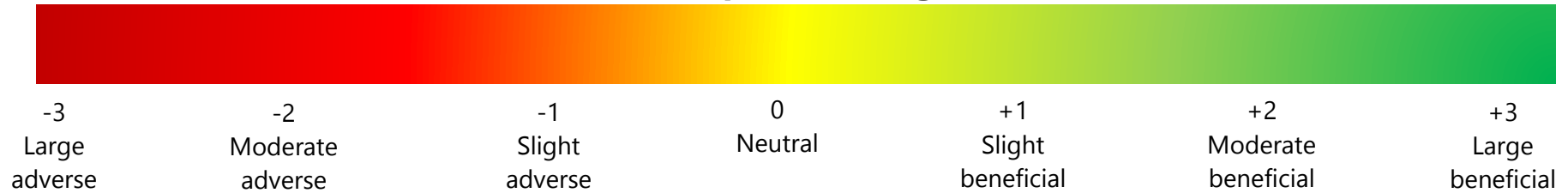


individual occupations were for community workers, builder's labourers, garden labourers and handypersons. The majority of paid work opportunities were casual and short term, with a focus on providing participants with work experience. Yet despite the focus on shorter-term placements, overall, the initiative was still successful in creating longer-term employment outcomes. Around a quarter of placements resulted in a 13-week outcome and around 11 per cent resulted in a 26-week outcome during the initiative.

These are just a few examples of how new approaches based on extensive community consultations can lead to positive outcomes for both job seekers and providers. The design of both the RJED program and the new remote employment service are informed by these learnings, and combined will deliver on the Government's commitment to improving employment outcomes in remote Australia.



Table 5 - Impact Rating Scale



Stakeholder	Reform option		Explanation
	1 CDP	2 RJED + new remote employment service	
Remote job seekers	-2	+2	<p>Option 1 will have no net benefit to job seekers in remote communities as there would be no change to labour market conditions as no new jobs would be created. Support under Option 1 would also remain the same in that it has limited flexibility to support job seekers to develop their skills and increase job-readiness. Option 2 would provide a positive net benefit for job seekers as new job opportunities will be created in communities to be filled by local job seekers. Job seekers employed in RJED funded jobs would have access to appropriate wages and conditions. Under Option 2, job seekers will benefit from the new remote employment service as it will provide more flexible support tailored to individual circumstances and support in assisting job seekers to transition into available local jobs. Option 2 benefits job seekers as they will be better supported to obtain pre-work requirements.</p>



Remote job seekers – youth/school leavers	-2.5	+2.5	<p>Option 1 will have no net benefit to young job seekers in remote communities as there would be no change to labour market conditions and no new jobs would be created specifically for youth. Option 2 includes a focus on youth, with applications assessed on how jobs will support groups particularly at risk of unemployment, including youth. Young job seekers employed in RJED funded jobs would have access to appropriate wages and conditions. Through the new remote employment service component of Option 2, support will likely increase engagement and participation in training, development and work readiness requirements. Overall, Option 2 is expected to have a higher net benefit on youth as they will be better supported to be job ready and there is increased likelihood of obtaining employment.</p>
Local employers	0	+2	<p>Under Option 1, there is not expected to be any benefit on local employers as there is no change to the service to increase job seekers’ job readiness and there is also no additional funding for local employers to create new jobs. Under Option 2, local employers will have the opportunity to apply for funding to create jobs and employ local people. Employers would also be able to apply for funding under the CJBF to pay for equipment, capacity building and infrastructure to support the creation of jobs under the program. Further, as Option 2 will provide tailored job placement and post-placement support, local employers will be more likely to retain staff and reduce turnover. Option 2 positions local employers to become employers of choice, enables employers to expand their services to meet community needs and supports broader economic development particularly through the CJBF.</p>
Remote employment service providers	+2.5	+1.5	<p>Option 1 will have a positive net benefit for existing CDP providers as they will be able to maintain their current operating model and continue with business as usual. Under Option 1, CDP providers would not be required to re-apply for funding and would have greater certainty and decreased risk of loss of funding. Under Option 2, existing CDP providers and potential new remote employment service providers would be required to apply for funding; however, because the new remote employment service retains the current IT and legislative frameworks of CDP, there won’t be a need to completely re-order their business model in order to participate in the new program. In some regions, providers outside of existing CDP providers have not had the opportunity to apply for funding for many years. Under Option 2, these providers would be able to apply for funding and potentially become a remote employment service provider. Under the RJED component of Option 2, new remote employment service providers would be able to expand their operations to also become RJED employers.</p>



Remote communities	-1	+2.5	<p>Option 1 would have no benefit on remote communities as there would be no change to labour market conditions as no new jobs would be created and job seekers would continue to receive the same support with no changes. Community engagement and participation is unlikely to increase under Option 1 as program parameters would remain the same. Under Option 2, remote communities would benefit from new jobs being created and a greater number of community members being employed. Communities would have greater decision-making control and autonomy to determine the types of jobs created, including those that benefit communities based on what each individual community wants and needs. As more local people will be employed under Option 2, communities are expected to have more money circulating through local businesses, extending economic benefits beyond just those employed in RJED jobs. Option 2 is expected to contribute to improved well-being for the community, including through improved and expanded services and increased community cohesion.</p>
Community-controlled organisations	-1	+2.5	<p>Option 1 would have no net benefit on community-controlled organisations as the same existing CDP providers would continue to deliver remote employment services with no opportunity for a greater number of community-controlled organisation to deliver remote employment services. Option 2 would have benefits for community-controlled organisations who may wish to apply for funding through the RJED program. Community controlled organisations would be able to benefit from funding through RJED to create jobs and thus expanding their organisation and/or services. Under Option 2, community-controlled organisations have the potential to directly apply for funding for the RJED program and/or to become a new remote employment service provider which is likely to improve community engagement. Strengthening First Nations community-controlled organisations is a key benefit of Option 2 and will contribute to National Agreement Priority Reform 2.</p>
Local councils	-1	+2.5	<p>Option 1 has no net benefit on local councils as the same existing providers would continue to deliver the CDP. Option 2 has a positive benefit as it would provide opportunities for local councils to expand service delivery through the creation of jobs through the RJED program. Under Option 2, local councils would be able to apply for funding for equipment for employees to carry out their job.</p>



Commonwealth Government	-2	+1.5	<p>Option 1 has no net benefit for Government as it would be continuing to deliver a program that it has committed to replacing. Option 2 would have positive benefit on the Commonwealth Government as it is an opportunity to implement two complementary programs to deliver on the election commitment to abolish the CDP. With increased employment rates under Option 2, the Government would benefit from increased income tax revenue, savings in income support payments and social supports as employment is associated with improved health and wellbeing. Option 2 also offers an opportunity for other Commonwealth agencies to provide input to the development of a remote workforce to meet their future needs.</p>
Average	-0.875	+2.125	



Impacts of Option 1

The following table (table 6) details the expected impacts of Option 1:

Table 6

Option 1 – Retain CDP – Status quo	
Cohort	Impacts
Remote job seekers	<p>The CDP continuing as it currently operates would not lead to improvements in employment outcomes for job seekers.</p> <p>While the CDP has the potential to boost job seeker’s employability through support, training and activities, the CDP is designed around the primary objective of getting local job seekers into employment even in locations with little or no employment prospects or where there is insufficient paid work for even a small number of job seekers. The CDP continuing as it currently operates would not lead to improvements in employment outcomes for job seekers as it would not impact job availability or remote market conditions.</p> <p>There would continue to be no specialised disability employment services.</p> <p>CDP is the disability employment services provider in remote areas; however, it does not offer any specialised disability employment services. People who would benefit from a disability employment service are generally only able to access CDP in their location.</p>
CDP providers	<p>Incentives do not recognise achievements outside of employment outcomes</p> <p>Providers are also largely only incentivised for employment outcomes, but even these incentives do not recognise significant achievements such as casual or seasonal employment in a thin labour market.</p> <p>The same providers would continue to deliver the CDP</p> <p>There has been limited open approaches to market or competition for CDP delivery for several years. This means, should the CDP continue in its current form there is a negative impact on organisations that may wish to apply for funding to be a provider.</p>
Remote communities	<p>The CDP has limited capability uplift for community-controlled organisations</p>



	<p>The CDP has limited capability building options for providers who are community-controlled organisations in remote Australia.</p> <p>Participation in activities as a mutual obligation is voluntary under the CDP</p> <p>Mutual obligations are in place for CDP participants as outlined in individuals' Job Plans, however participation in activities has been voluntary since May 2021. This change has resulted in a significant decline in participation and many CDP providers then stopped running activities. Feedback received through community consultations in 2023 and 2024 is that this change has had a detrimental impact on some communities.</p> <p>There may be other community organisations that wish to apply for funding to be a CDP provider but are not able to if the CDP continues</p> <p>The delivery of a remote employment service has not been open to the market or competition in several years, as such other organisations have not had the opportunity to apply for funding to deliver employment services.</p>
Employers	<p>There would be no additional funding for employers to expand and employ local people</p> <p>Under current CDP arrangements, there is no opportunities for local employers to expand their business to employ local job seekers.</p> <p>Employers can find new employees through the CDP</p> <p>Under current arrangements, whereby CDP providers are required to actively work with local employers to support job seeker training, education, placements or tenured roles; local businesses can benefit from accessing an updated pool of local candidates who are job-ready or on a pathway to become job-ready.</p>
Australian Government	<p>The Government would continue to invest in a program that it has already agreed to replace.</p>

What is the overall net benefit of Option 1?

Overall, Option 1 does not effectively provide a positive net benefit for job seekers or remote communities as it has generally not been successful in significantly improving labour market conditions in remote Australia.

The primary benefits of Option 1 are for CDP providers as they would have certainty of funding and able to continue to deliver their services as business as usual. This option does not work towards reform.



Impacts of Option 2

The following table (table 7) details the expected impacts of Option 2:

Table 7

Option 2 – Replace the CDP with the RJED program and the new remote employment service	
Cohort	Impacts
Remote job seekers	<p>Increased employment and work experience</p> <p>The RJED program will give job seekers the chance to learn and earn a fair wage and receive tailored support along the way. This includes receiving on the job training, up-skilling and mentoring. Jobs in community will allow for flexibility so the employee can meet personal commitments.</p> <p>The RJED program will be based on finding meaningful and culturally safe work with pathways to progression. The broader benefit to the employee is that it will set them up with the right skills in order to obtain more long-term work in the future.</p> <p>Job seekers in areas with non-viable labour markets will have the opportunity to work in a real job and reap the associated flow on benefits.</p> <p>Positive impacts associated with employment</p> <p>Job seekers will have the opportunity to move off welfare and into a formal employment relationship to build skills, experience and confidence in their jobs. This in turn has important socioeconomic benefits like increased economic independence, ability to invest in individual and family interests and priorities, such as health, education and housing, and meet the cost of living in remote areas, which can be higher than non-remote areas.</p> <p>Support better tailored to individual circumstances</p> <p>Recognising that not everyone will be ready to go into a job, the new remote employment service will support people onto pathways to work and provide services and supports individually tailored to participants' goals, needs and proximity to the labour market. There will be a focus on workforce development through provision of a responsive, community-based service for job seekers to support participant aspirations to learn or build upon existing skills to move into existing jobs or a pathway to employment. The new remote employment service will adopt a case management style approach. This will benefit job seekers as it enables support to be tailored and</p>



	appropriate to individuals' job-readiness and personal circumstances.
Remote employment service providers	<p>Creation of new jobs</p> <p>Under the RJED program, new remote employment service providers may be eligible to apply for funding to create new jobs and through the CJBF may also be able to receive funding for minor capital work and equipment so those employed in a RJED funded job have the resources they need to do their job. Providers may be able to broaden their service offer with these additional funds.</p> <p>CDP providers will need to re-apply for funding to deliver employment services</p> <p>Under this option, CDP provider contracts would cease, and providers would need to apply to deliver remote employment services under the new remote employment service. CDP providers would have less certainty and would be required to go through the grant application process.</p>
Remote communities	<p>Creation of new jobs that are valued and needed by communities</p> <p>The RJED program will fund eligible organisations to create jobs and deliver programs and services that community want. The RJED program will focus on jobs that are valued by communities but are not currently funded and do not currently have a commercial base. Jobs will be flexible to reflect community and participant needs. It is expected the RJED program will contribute positively to community wellbeing as real jobs pave the way for improving social and economic participation, strengthening communities, and are linked to better health and education, housing and community safety outcomes.</p> <p>New or different community organisations can apply for funding</p> <p>With CDP contracts ceasing, this provides the opportunity for other local organisations to deliver remote employment services where there has not been the opportunity to apply for funding to deliver this type of service for a significant period of time.</p> <p>Stimulated local economies</p> <p>With increased employment it is expected that there will be additional funds circulating through communities, having flow on and circular impacts for local economies. The policy aims to build the skills of local workforce and in so doing, may lead to positive effects that lead to greater job creation (i.e. for projects that may currently be unviable due to skilled labour shortages) in remote labour markets, which may</p>



	<p>help to improve socio-economic conditions for remote communities in the long term.</p> <p>Progress towards a reduced reliance on fly in fly out or drive in drive out workforce</p> <p>People employed in a job under the RJED program will grow their capabilities and confidence helping them to transition into jobs already funded and available but currently filled by a ‘fly-in, fly-out’ workforce.</p> <p>Greater community control</p> <p>This option will address community concerns about the need for greater community leadership and control in managing local employment issues and meeting remote job seeker needs. Remote employment service providers will have stronger requirements to engage and involve community in how funding is spent in remote locations.</p>
Employers	<p>Employers will be able to employ new people and expand services or business</p> <p>Employing organisations will be able to identify local economic and community development opportunities and jobs to be created through the RJED program. Employers have the opportunity to apply for funding through the CJBFB which provides funding for equipment, capacity building and infrastructure to complement wages so those employed in a job funded under the RJED program have the resources needed to do their job.</p> <p>Jobs may be filled more quickly as the RJED program and the new remote employment service are complementary</p> <p>Jobs created through the RJED program may be able to be filled more quickly as the two programs are designed to be complementary to one another. Remote employment service providers will be able to assist employers in identifying suitable job seekers to fill jobs as they arise whether through the RJED program or elsewhere.</p> <p>Greater economic development for local employers</p> <p>The RJED program will also support local organisations to recognise and realise local economic development opportunities in place. For example, should the RJED program provide funding for jobs and a grader for local road works, the employing organisation will gain experience and be more competitive to win future tenders to upgrade local roads as they already have the grader and skilled workers to drive it.</p>



Australian Government	Under this option there is potential to reduce long term costs to the Government resulting from the take up of jobs (e.g. decrease in welfare spending, increase in income tax, investment in superannuation and reduced aged care pension).
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What is the overall net benefit of Option 2?

Overall, Option 2 will create 3,000 Government-funded jobs in remote Australia, better support remote job seekers into available jobs, and support people who are not job-ready, or who are unable to be placed in a job right away, with the skills and resources they need.

Over time, it will continue to safeguard against participants’ continued reliance on income support payments, in the absence of real jobs under the status quo option. Critically, this option will support jobseekers in remote communities to move into employment by funding jobs that communities will prioritise and give more flexibility to communities to determine local programs and services that support economic development, including under the CJBF

Option 2 will have a positive overall net benefit due to the focus on helping job seekers to address existing inequities and by delivering meaningful pathways to work. The new remote employment service is designed to drive community engagement and aspiration, and signals alignment with future employment services reform.

Regulatory Burden Estimate

The Regulatory Burden Estimate (RBE) follows the guidance and costings advice provided by the Office of Impact Analysis (OIA). The regulatory burden measurements have been calculated on a three-year basis. As per the guidelines of the OIA, costs are presented on an average per year basis, and the duration of quantification is three years, based on the Government’s commitment for the continuity of remote jobs to be delivered across multiple grant rounds from financial years 2023-24 through to 2026-27.

Regulatory Burden Estimate for Option 1

Retaining the status quo (continuity of the CDP in its current form) would not expect to introduce additional regulatory burden as there would be no change to the current CDP. Regulatory costs to CDP providers under the current program would continue to be absorbed under existing contractual arrangements between the Government and CDP providers. Similarly, requirements for CDP participants would not change, and no additional costs would be passed onto the community or local organisations.

As discussed earlier, engagement in CDP activities is currently voluntary for CDP participants, which has led to a remarkable reduction in activity attendance (80 per cent since the change took effect in May 2021). This change has reduced the reporting and compliance burden for CDP providers and participants.



Overall, the regulatory burden estimate for this option is nil as there are no additional requirements on CDP providers, participants or communities. The CDP would continue to operate as business-as-usual. While the CDP does not have a regulatory burden, it represents a cost to remote Australia as it is not effectively addressing the underlying issues such as limited employment opportunities.

Regulatory Burden Estimate for Option 2

The RBE for Option 2 is separated out across the two-constituent part of the proposal, and includes a range of assumptions as model inputs that could vary over time, including:

For the RJED program

- that participants will complete their required reporting obligations once in receipt of an RJED job
- that the initial grant application process for approximately 300 prospective employers will take 3 full-time staff approximately 75 hours to complete
- that out of the 3000 jobs on offer, roughly 2400 will be part-time and 600 full-time

For the new remote employment service

- that the number of remote job seekers will remain steady at around 42,000 in line with the current CDP caseload
- that connecting with a new service provider and undertaking updated assessments will take on average 1 hour for jobseekers
- that the initial grant application process for approximately 60 prospective providers will take 3 full-time staff approximately 75 hours to complete
- that community consultation will be concentrated in the 60 CDP (transition) regions, across 206 sites within those regions

The total costs in the table below are calculated using the OIA Regulatory Burden Measurement Framework. It includes consideration of the cost of compliance with the elements of Option 2, including:

- Administrative costs – costs incurred by regulated entities primarily to demonstrate compliance with the policy (usually record keeping and reporting costs), and
- Substantive compliance costs – costs incurred to deliver the outcomes being sought (usually purchase and maintenance costs).

The default labour costs for individuals are based on average weekly earnings and are estimated at \$37 per hour. Default labour costs for business or community organisations are based on average weekly earnings but adjusted to account for the non-wage labour on-costs. This results in a scaled-up rate of \$85.17 per hour.



Table 8 – RBE for the new remote employment service and the RJED program

New remote employment service			
Regulatory Costs to Individuals (Job Seekers)		OIA RBE Formula	Total
Administrative costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting with a new remote employment service provider 	(Time required × Labour cost) × (Times performed × Number of individuals)	CAL: (\$37 p/h x 1hrs to complete) x (1 x 42,000) = \$1.55m
Substantive Compliance Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil 		
Regulatory Costs to Business (new remote employment service providers)		OIA RBE Formula	Total
Administrative Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial grant application process (once off cost – Based on 2yr initial+2yr extension contract terms) 	(Time required × Labour cost) × (Times performed × Number of businesses or community organisations × Number of staff)	CAL: (\$85.17 p/h x 75) x (1-off x 60 providers x 3 FTE) = \$1.2m
Substantive Compliance Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil 		
Regulatory Costs to Community		OIA RBE Formula	Total
Administrative Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement required for grant application process with community leadership groups. Including around establishing community engagements (activities) communities want and need. 	(Time required × Labour cost) × (Times performed × Number of businesses or community organisations × Number of staff)	CAL: (\$85.17 p/h x 2) x (number of volunteers 6) x (1 x 4 - once weekly for a month) x (2 community groups for each community) x (206 new remote employment service sites) = \$1.7m
Substantive Compliance Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil 		
Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program			
Regulatory Costs to Individuals (Job Seekers)		OIA RBE Formula	Total



Administrative costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing employment paperwork to take up an employment opportunity via the RJED program (once off regulatory cost) 	(Time required × Labour cost) × (Times performed × Number of individuals)	CAL: (\$37 p/h x 2) x (1 x 3000) = \$222,000 over 3 years or \$74,000 p/a
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fortnightly reporting to Government agencies (Centrelink/Services Australia) on income support payments for participants engaged in part-time work 		CAL: (\$37 p/h x 1) x (26 x 2400) = \$6.9m over 3 years, or \$2.3m p/a
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other income reporting obligations to government agencies for individuals engaged in work (e.g. personal information relating to child support, state housing etc.) 		CAL: (\$37 p/h x 1) x (3000) = \$333,000 over 3 years, or \$111,000 p/a
Substantive compliance costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil 		
Regulatory Costs to Business (employers)		OIA RBE Formula	Total
Administrative Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial grant application process 	(Time required × Labour cost) × (Times performed × Number of businesses or community organisations × Number of staff)	CAL: (\$85.17 p/h x 75) x (1-off x 300 x 3FTE) = \$5.75m (over three years) or \$1.9m p/a
Substantive Compliance Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil 		
Regulatory Costs to Community		OIA RBE Formula	Total
Administrative Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual strategic planning to identify community priorities (where no existing process) 	(\$85.17 p/h x number of hours) x (number of volunteers)	CAL: (\$85.17 p/h x 8) x (103 sites x 9FTE) = \$1.9m over 3 years, or \$631,620 p/a
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation and engagement (voluntary) 	(\$85.17 p/h x number of hours) x (number of volunteers)	CAL: (\$85.17 p/h x 8) x (206 sites x 2FTE)



			= \$842,160 over 3 years, or \$280,720 p/a
Substantive Compliance Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing evidence of decision making and job prioritisation processes to accompany community grant applications for funding 	(\$85.17 p/h x number of hours) x (number of volunteers)	CAL: (\$85.17 p/h x 1) x (206 sites x 1FTE) = \$52,635 over 3 years, or \$17,545 p/a
TOTAL FOR OPTION 2 (RJED + new remote employment service)			\$9.764 million

Discussion of regulatory impacts of Option 2 on key stakeholders

Administrative and substantive compliance costs to job seekers, providers, communities and future community employers for the Option 2 would be variable, as per the summary table above.

Regulatory impacts on job seekers

While Option 2 has a greater regulatory burden on job seekers as they would be required to move to the new remote employment service and undertake an updated assessment, this is not significantly more burdensome than what is required under the CDP (for example through monthly meetings). Regarding the RJED program, the regulatory burden is primarily administrative such as completing paperwork required for obtaining a job and reporting income to Centrelink. This is not RJED exclusive, all job seekers who obtain employment would be required to undertake these administrative activities.

Regulatory impacts on communities

Under Option 2, the regulatory burden for communities relates to community workforce planning. Stakeholders identified that workforce planning is an essential element to creating quality, relevant and meaningful jobs that local people want and can participate in. Empowering communities to prioritise, plan and drive decision-making processes to support community jobs is likely to deliver on a high level of job uptake and continuity of employees into positions in other funding streams. Many communities already have such processes in place. Not all community organisations who drive these decisions will necessarily be employers. It is important to recognise the diverse and dynamic roles of community members and organisations who may deal with local issues that have an influence on local jobs, including community leaders/elders, job seekers, community support organisations and a range of service providers and businesses.

Regulatory impacts on employers

The NIAA will provide support for community-based employers to apply for Government grants to create new jobs through the RJED program or to be a new remote employment service provider.



Organisations will be required to work alongside their community to identify jobs, services and projects they need and want, and together work out how these opportunities will be realised. Successful grant applicants/employers will sign a grant agreement with the NIAA to receive funds.

With respect to regulatory burden, the main impact on employers is the time commitment required to engage in Government grant application and administration processes to obtain funding and resources to support job creation and support local job seekers to transition into jobs. Any impacts from grant approval delays will entail the main cost RJED and new remote employment service grant rounds could overlap with one another. However, if an overlap were to occur, this would only happen on one occasion if the new remote employment service grant round period runs at the same time as one of the RJED program grant rounds (noting there would likely be two RJED grant rounds per year).

Organisations employing job seekers using RJED program funding will be required to comply with relevant workplace relations laws and standards. This is not considered a regulatory burden as this is standard practice for all employers nationally.

Table 9 below outlines the average annual regulatory costs for key stakeholders under Option 2:

Table 9 – Regulatory burden estimate of average annual costs to key stakeholders for the new remote employment service and the RJED program

Average annual regulatory costs (from business as usual)				
Change in costs (\$ million)	Business	Community organisations	Individuals	Total change in costs
Total, by sector	\$3.100	\$2.629	\$4.035	\$9.764

Summary

Based on the net benefit analysis presented in this Chapter, Option 2 is considered to have the highest net benefit due to it directly influencing remote market conditions which will have a positive impact on remote job seekers’ ability to gain employment. Option 2 also supports a community-led approach to determining what jobs are wanted and needed by communities. Further, Option 2 will help to address barriers to employment including training and skill development opportunities, and link participants with suitable employment opportunities, including those created through the RJED program.

With a strong focus on local, place-based initiatives, Option 2 will provide value through community projects, social enterprise and participant centred service offerings. It will also provide the opportunity for innovative approaches to employment in remote Australia to be strengthened, harnessing the successes and learnings of effective community-led projects and trials.

As per the multi-criteria analysis, the decision rule for the highest net benefit under the RBE is the same resulting in Option 2 providing the highest net benefit as it is on track to deliver the



greatest benefit to stakeholders as assessed in the multi-criteria analysis, whereas Option 1 (status quo) will provide mixed impacts on various stakeholder groups.

While Option 1 presents no additional regulatory costs, it represents a cost with respect to the overall goals of the policy. Doing nothing under Option 1 is not a viable solution as stakeholders have been calling for a new approach in remote Australia and it does not deliver on the Government's commitment to replace CDP. Although Option 2 will come with a minor regulatory burden on stakeholders, the benefits significantly outweigh the costs.



5. Who did you consult and how did you incorporate their feedback?

Purpose and objectives of consultation

The Australian Government has committed to working in partnership with remote communities to reform the CDP. To deliver on the Government's commitment NIAA will continue to undertake extensive consultation with remote communities, leaders, individuals, Indigenous peak bodies and organisations, which is essential to shared decision-making in the design and implementation of a new program.

Remote Employment Roundtable

The first phase of consultations formally began with the Remote Employment Roundtable hosted by the then Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP, on 31 August 2022. The Roundtable was one of a number held by Ministers in the lead-up to the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit on 1-2 September 2022.

The objectives of the Roundtable were to harness expertise and insights on employment challenges and labour markets in remote Australia, particularly those experienced by First Nations people. The Roundtable was designed to bring a number of experts together to share their insights on employment challenges and labour markets in remote Australia, before more targeted consultations are held in remote communities.

The Minister hosted representatives from peak bodies, relevant alliances and unions, community and business leaders as well as a number of local councils, to have frank and open discussions on key employment challenges and opportunities in remote Australia.

The key messages from the Roundtable were:

- The importance of real jobs with proper wages and decent conditions.
- One size does not fit all. The new program needs to be community-led, meeting community needs.
- Developing pathways to work, including access to appropriate training, will help ensure that people are job ready.
- Need to unlock the barriers for entry to jobs, in particular police checks and licensing.
- Mapping of job opportunities within communities will be an important element in helping connect people to work.
- The engagement and contribution of other government portfolios, all levels of government and industry will be critical.

Listen and learn community consultations

Between February 2023 and June 2023, the NIAA conducted listen and learn community consultations. Consultations involved engagement with remote communities, service providers and government entities and concluded in 2023 with a CDP providers forum. The



NIAA worked in partnership with Cross Cultural Consultants to drive this stage of community consultations. We heard from over 2250 people in over 100 CDP communities. An online form and survey provided the opportunity for a further 250 stakeholders to be involved. From these consultations we heard the new program should:

- Be planned and led by community with community control and ownership for maximum effectiveness in program development and implementation.
- For CDP to transition from a remote employment service to a holistic service approach that addresses a range of community needs, including capacity building at the local level, empowering individuals and providing sustainable outcomes beyond employment.
- Tailoring the program to local conditions and contexts so there is opportunity for regionally specific solutions.
- Shift to purposeful, relevant and locally delivered training that addresses barriers to employment and aligns with real local opportunities.
- Funding and recognising roles that are already being performed and making a valuable contribution to the local community.
- Empowering youth through sustainable targeted initiatives, career pathways and support systems.
- A balanced and supportive approach to mutual obligation requirements with a focus on regional and remote contexts to encourage participation, shared accountability and facilitate transition into employment.
- The adoption of a nuanced and multifaceted services system that provides assistance regarding the diversity of barriers to employment faced by participants, recognising the broad range of participant circumstances that influence the job seeker journey.
- More transparent and robust information flows, channels and feedback mechanisms between bureaucratic decision makers and local communities.

Figure 7 (below) provides the snapshot of key themes throughout this phase of consultations. These themes, together with lessons learned from trials, previous feedback on remote engagement, performance information, committee reports and evaluations, have given us valuable insights into how a new program could be developed and implemented. A *Replacing the Community Development Program consultation report*, video and snapshot have been developed and published on the niaa.gov.au website for public transparency.

Figure 7: Themes from community consultation





December 2023 Stakeholder Engagement

Drawing on the themes identified in the listen and learn consultations and previous feedback, the NIAA engaged with an additional 18 First Nations key stakeholders in December 2023. Their feedback was that a new program should be developed with the following principles:

- The new program’s job creation should be community led.
- Economic activity should be considered in remote communities and create jobs in partnership with communities so that local decision making can lead and direct activities.
- Job creation will need to be managed carefully and staged through annual increases to job numbers.
- Employment services will need to be considered alongside the findings for the House of Representatives Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services report and Government response.

The NIAA also sought feedback on what a potential First Nations governance and shared decision-making mechanism would look like to ensure First Nations people were part of the design and delivery of a new program.

Stakeholders such as the Land Councils, Coalition of Peaks and Empowered Communities were very supportive of the proposed new approach, particularly around strengthening First Nations partnership and shared decision-making.

There was also an overwhelmingly positive response on the broad direction of a community-centred approach for the new program.



Phase 2 consultations April – July 2024

Between April and July 2024, the NIAA undertook a range of roundtables and one-on-one meetings with relevant stakeholders and commenced a second phase of comprehensive remote community consultations. The objective was to check-back with communities and key stakeholders on what we heard in the first phase and discuss the design principles for a future program.

Consultations were held at the national, jurisdictional, regional, local and individual level to inform the design of the new program. Engagement and consultation were informed by advice from Regional Managers and staff.

The NIAA asked regional offices in February 2024 for guidance on:

- where to go (including some of the 100 or so remote communities consulted in the first phase)
- when to go (from April to July 2024), and
- who to speak to (relevant stakeholders).

In this phase of consultations, we sought input via:

- Face-to-face and virtual sessions with remote communities across the country
- Roundtables
- Survey responses
- Submissions in response to a discussion paper, and
- Learnings from job trials in remote Australia (the CDP Trial, the New Jobs Program Trial and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trial).

We held over 350 individual engagements and heard from more than 3,100 people.

- The majority of the meetings held were within remote communities.
- We engaged with approximately 200 remote communities within the 60 CDP regions.
- Approximately 400 CDP provider staff were present at many community meetings.
- We engaged with approximately 40 CDP employment services staff exclusively.

Overall feedback was positive and supportive of the proposed design of the RJED program. The key themes found were that employers and employees want a program that is similar to the old Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) that includes:

- Support and skills to complete paperwork for employment
- Continuous on-the-job training
- Ongoing tailored mentoring and coaching
- Long-term sustainability of jobs, and
- Employment that supports local cultural needs.



As an extension of the second phase of consultations, the draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GOGs) for the RJED program were released for public consultation in July 2024 as the next step in working in partnership to design the program. We heard the following feedback and are taking it into consideration in the final version of the GOGs:

- The GOGs need to better define the terms community and real/meaningful jobs
- The application process should be as simple as possible and include substantial support from the NIAA. This includes support with grant writing, and
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and other small, local organisations are best placed to be a part of the RJED program and adequate support should be available to support these organisations including capacity building.

During community consultations on the RJED program, many people offered their views on what a new remote employment service to replace the CDP should look like. These views have informed the design of the new remote employment service including:

- The new service should be participant-centred with case management to reflect job readiness pathways.
- The new service should be planned and led by communities. Some CDP arrangements are not working and providers could do more to help participants secure employment.
- There is a need for more local job creation, moving people off income support and into real jobs (jobs stimulated through the RJED program and through other opportunities).
- Relationships between providers and participants should be based on reciprocity. Some providers could do more to build trust and rapport with participants and encourage engagement.
- Providers could be more flexible with appointments by meeting with participants in community, rather than participants attending the provider's premises.

It should be noted that views varied between stakeholders on certain features of what should be included in a new program to replace the CDP.

For example, feedback provided via public consultations undertaken between February and June 2023, a NIAA survey and the NIAA online 'Have Your Say' form has been analysed. The consultation data analysed indicates support for introducing incentives to participate in activities. Comments provided indicated that compulsory activities provided motivation for participating in activities and that without this incentive, participants often stopped attending activities. Although not all respondents indicated support for making activities compulsory, many indicated a need for incentives to participate. Public consultation, survey and 'Have Your Say' data came from a wide range of sources, including CDP providers, community members, job seekers and other stakeholders (such as local government councils and employers in CDP regions).

Of the first 111 community consultations undertaken, 50 included a specific expression of support for the reintroduction of compulsory activities. Four were opposed to the reintroduction of mutual obligations. The remainder were either unclear or indicated that they would prefer a different option such as the top-up wages offered under the former CDEP



program. These views have informed Option 2 in that there will be a focus on encouraging engagement through activities ahead of the use of compliance mechanisms.

Publicly available consultation reports

The report from the first phase of consultations is published on the NIAA website, available here: [Replacing the Community Development Program consultation report](#). Recently, the second phase report was also published on the NIAA website, available here: [Replacing the Community Development Program – second phase of community consultations report](#).

These findings, together with lessons learned from trials (detail at Appendix A) and advice from the First Nations Reference Group, will inform the final recommendations to Government about the design of the new remote employment service.



6. What is the best option from those you have considered and how will it be implemented?

This chapter outlines which policy option of those analysed is recommended and discusses how the preferred policy can be implemented.

What is the best option from those you have considered?

The findings of the analysis support pursuing Option 2 which is to implement a new approach to real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions through two complementary programs – the RJED program to create jobs and a new remote employment service to better prepare and connect job seekers to local employment opportunities.

Option one (status quo – retaining the CDP) is not preferred as the multi-criteria analysis provided in chapter 4 of this report shows there is not a strong rationale for retaining the CDP with the exception of continuity for current CDP providers. Whist option 2, has a higher regulatory burden primarily relating to grant and community design processes it paves the way for community-led solutions which are more likely to succeed in achieving positive outcomes for communities. Again, despite the higher regulatory burden of option 2, it is directly taking action to address the root cause of the policy problem as explored in Chapter 1.

There has been a growing call over many years from stakeholders for the CDP to be replaced with a new approach that addresses the lack of jobs in remote communities. In addition, evidence gathered from consultations with remote communities and stakeholders in phase one and two of national consultations (Chapter 5 of this report refers), combined with performance evaluations of the CDP, and the Monitoring Evidence and Learning approach to capture lessons learned from trials underway (Appendix A refers) indicates that the CDP should not be retained.

There is a clear expectation from communities and interested stakeholders that the CDP should be replaced with a new program that considers the circumstances of ‘place’ and a holistic view of how remote communities can contribute to and benefit from Government investment in jobs and economic development. To follow through with the Government’s election commitment to create jobs in partnership with remote communities, a new approach is preferred and needed.

The investment in real jobs under Option 2 is the best way forward to meet the Australian Government’s commitment of replacing CDP with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions in partnership with First Nations people. A First Nations Reference Group comprising representatives with expertise and lived experience in remote economic development has been established to provide advice to Government on the design and implementation of the both the RJED program and the new remote employment service. The new remote employment service under option 2 reflects feedback from consultations that the



service should use a case management style approach that is flexible to individual job-readiness and circumstances and proximity to the labour market.

The multi-criteria analysis undertaken in chapter 4 resulted in a +2.125 benefit for option 2 in comparison to -0.875 for option 1. With scores ranging between -3 and +3, the outcome for option 2 is significantly higher than option 1. This means option 2 has a greater overall benefit to stakeholders. This can primarily be attributed to the real jobs created under the RJED program providing real wages and conditions, the benefits increased employment will have on individuals as well as the flow on impacts at the community level such as increased economic development of local organisations particularly through the CJBF. The new remote employment service contributes to the higher net benefit as it will provide flexible support tailored to individual circumstances and support in assisting job seekers to overcome barriers. Together, the RJED program and the new remote employment service will provide greater benefits for stakeholders than the status quo (CDP).

It is important to highlight while there are greater benefits to stakeholders for option 2, there is also a greater regulatory burden as there are two programs under option 2 compared to one under option 1. The regulatory burden of option 2 is largely associated with community engagement required for grant application process with community leadership groups. This is a significant burden; however, it presents opportunities for the programs under option 2 to be community-driven and responsive to local needs. Communities are best placed to know what is needed in their communities and what will and won't work. Taking a community-driven approach means the program is more likely to achieve positive outcomes for communities and thus a good investment of funds.

Status of the Impact Analysis

Table 10 outlines the Impact Analysis at each major decision point to highlight that this Impact Analysis has been informed by stakeholder consultation and has been continually updated to inform government decision making.

Table 10 - Status of the Impact Analysis at each major decision point

Decision point/point in policy development	Timeframe	Status of the Impact Analysis
Remote Employment Roundtable hosted by the then Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP	31 August 2022	Undeveloped
Authority on approach to replace CDP with a New Jobs Program	October 2022	Undeveloped / Preliminary work on Impact Analysis commenced
Agreement to extend CDP contracts to 31 October 2024	November 2022	Undeveloped / Preliminary work on Impact Analysis commenced



Agreement on the next phase for CDP replacement	December 2022	Undeveloped/ Preliminary work on Impact Analysis commenced
Government announces first round of consultation on replacing the CDP	August 2022	Stakeholder engagement to inform the full Impact Analysis
Stakeholder engagement on replacing CDP	February – June 2023	Stakeholder engagement to inform the full Impact Analysis
Agreement to extend CDP contracts to 30 June 2025	February 2024	Work on Impact Analysis
Policy authority on final design of Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program	July 2024	Final design of the RJED program to inform the full Impact Analysis
OIA 1 st Pass Final assessment	October 2024	First pass assessment Impact Analysis completed. OIA first pass assessment comments addressed, and certification letter prepared for second pass
OIA 2 nd Pass Final assessment	October 2024	Impact Analysis for second pass assessment presented to OIA
Final Policy decision to proceed with proposal	October 2024	To be informed by Impact Analysis that has been through final assessment by OIA

Implementation sequencing

The below diagram (figure 8) provides high-level sequencing of implementing both the RJED program and the new remote employment service.



Figure 8 – implementation sequencing

RJED program Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GOGs) Round 1 goes live
RJED evaluation baseline agreed
RJED GOG applications close
RJED GOGs are assessed
Applicants of the RJED program are advised of the outcome and contracts are executed
RJED funding is received by employers
RJED program assurance framework is in place
RJED employers hire local job seekers
Ongoing monitoring across the RJED program
Future rounds of RJED are opened periodically
New remote employment service is announced
New remote employment service GOGs go live
New remote employment service applications close
New remote employment service GOGs are assessed
New remote employment service providers are advised of the outcome and contracts are executed
Communications to CDP participants about upcoming changes
Induction training for new remote employment service providers and capability uplift commences
New remote employment service evaluation and assurance framework and is in place
New remote employment service baseline is agreed
Move from CDP to new remote employment service
New assessments are undertaken for all new remote employment service participants
New remote employment service providers deliver service as agreed in contracts and provide tailored support to job seekers
Ongoing monitoring and learning of new remote employment service
Evaluation reporting



Further information on how the preferred option will be implemented

The preferred option will be implemented in two stages detailed below.

Stage 1 – RJED program

The first step is implementation of the RJED program which will occur through a phased roll out over three years from late 2024. The RJED program will be administered through competitive grant rounds, with the first grant round to open in late 2024. It is expected that two rounds may be held each financial year.

The Grant Opportunity Guidelines for the RJED program will set out broad parameters for eligibility and operation of the RJED program. The RJED Grant Opportunity Guidelines have been informed by advice from the First Nations Reference Group and feedback received through consultation with remote communities and stakeholders. In addition, the RJED program Grant Opportunity Guidelines were published online for public consultation. Together, this has informed the following criteria for the Grant Opportunity Guidelines to ensure the RJED program best meets the needs of remote job seekers and remote communities:

- eligibility criteria, including locations and types of organisations that will be eligible to receive funding
- eligible expenditure and period of funding
- eligible activities, including types of jobs
- application and selection processes, ensuring these are proportional and accountable, and meet probity and transparency requirements
- monitoring and evaluation, and
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to funding.

Grant funding will be provided for eligible organisations to fund jobs including wages at award rates for entry level jobs, allowances, penalty rates, overtime, casual loading, leave loading (where applicable) and 11.5% superannuation (for employees aged 18 and over or for employees aged under 18 and working more than 30 hours per week). Further details of the features of RJED program grants will be published online when available.

The NIAA has also worked with internal and external stakeholders through established governance structures to establish sound administration practices that will help ensure the delivery of the RJED program is efficient, effective and achieves value for money.

The implementation of the RJED program will occur in two phases:

- Phase One: Pre-implementation focuses on finalising the RJED Grant Opportunity Guidelines for release last quarter 2024.
- Phase Two: ‘Monitor and adapt’ will focus on business-as-usual implementation and program monitoring, with necessary adjustments to ensure the RJED program continues to deliver outcomes in remote communities.



- NJPT Transition: Transition will run concurrently with Phase Two and run until 30 June 2025, focusing on transitioning jobs funded through the New Jobs Program Trial and making the RJED program available to all remote employment services regions.

Stage 2 – new remote employment service

The second step to deliver on the commitment to replace CDP is the design and implementation of the new remote employment service to commence when current CDP arrangements end. The new remote employment service which will operate for up to two years and is expected to be implemented through a competitive grants process. There will be the option of at least two 12-month extensions to provide greater certainty and secure providers to deliver services on the ground.

A grant is the most appropriate funding mechanism for delivering the required services, in addition, it is the most flexible and expedient way for the NIAA to deliver outcomes that meet the objectives of the new remote employment service.

The CDP caseload will need to move from the CDP to the new remote employment service when it commences. Effective communication through a number of relevant and targeted channels, and prioritising communication in plain language and oral interpretation will ensure everyone affected by the change has the knowledge, tools and information to engage with the new program.



7. How will you evaluate your chosen option against the success metrics?

This chapter provides an overview of the approach to monitoring and evaluating the success of the preferred policy option (option 2).

RJED and new remote employment service - monitoring, evaluation and learning

The RJED program and the new remote employment service will be evaluated at the program level to understand how they are contributing to increasing employment in remote communities and whether they are achieving the intended outcomes.

The NIAA will monitor, evaluate and learn from the two programs across the life of the programs from design and implementation through to delivery, impacts and outcomes. The NIAA will also report on program performance as part of annual performance reporting.

Under the preferred option, a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework will be developed for the programs, setting out a coherent approach to measure success and to inform opportunities for improvement. The elements of the framework are:

- **Monitoring:** a continuous view of implementation progress
- **Evaluation:** a periodic analysis of implementation and impact, assessing against the stated objectives
- **Learning:** opportunities to reflect on, and use, the evidence generated to further support innovation, collaboration, and improvement to realise the ambition of the programs.

The approach to monitoring, evaluation, and learning is being informed by the CDP Trials and New Jobs Program Trial, and what is working well to collect data and develop lessons learned. Further, monitoring, evaluation and learning methods will be collaborative where possible, and strengths-based. The evaluation will be able to draw upon a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. Data collection could include surveys, interviews and focus groups for example.

RJED program evaluation

A Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework will be established for the RJED program. The MEL Framework is required to support:

- continuous improvement and shared learning from the program design, delivery and outcomes, and
- assessments of quality of program design and implementation, program performance, and program outcomes (including both intended and unintended).

The MEL framework will outline the approaches to:



Monitoring

- Monitoring will primarily focus on tracking and assessing the ongoing processes, activities, and outputs of the RJED program. It will be set up to ensure that activities are implemented as planned while identifying any issues or deviations in real-time. It will also ensure that the correct data is being collected to measure relevant outcomes.
- Monitoring will need to be continuous and occur throughout the RJED program's implementation and delivery. It should involve regular and systematic data collection and analysis to inform decision-making and adjustments as needed. This will help program managers and providers identify problems early, enabling timely corrective actions.
- Monitoring will need to generate information at both the grant level and at the program level, and support reporting on performance at both levels.
- Monitoring activities will need to rely on routine and ongoing data collection methods. This may include checklists, progress reports, feedback mechanisms, and other tools to track performance against predetermined indicators.

Evaluation

- Evaluation activities must be designed to be fit for purpose in a remote context to assess the quality of program design and implementation; program performance; the outcomes of the program (intended and unintended); and, inform how the program can be improved over time. Key evaluation questions and focal areas will be informed by stakeholder input during the development of the MEL Framework. The evaluation may consider social impacts and economic impacts as well as employment outcomes.
- Evaluation should be conducted periodically, at key milestones and/or at the end of a program.

Learning

- Learning activities will be focused on continuous improvement and capacity building.
- The RJED program is being developed iteratively, therefore learning activities should support that change over time. Learning is an ongoing and iterative set of process, woven into the fabric of NIAA activities. The focus should be on learning from experiences, both successes and failures, to inform and adapt future actions.
- Learning encompasses a broad Indigenous context and organisational context, aiming to capture institutional knowledge, insights, and best practices. It extends beyond individual activities or initiatives, fostering a learning mindset among individuals and teams and a culture of continuous improvement.
- Learning could involve reflective practices such as after-action reviews, knowledge sharing sessions, deep listening, and collaborative discussions.

The MEL Framework will need to use robust and appropriate data sources and methods and provide a clear rationale for why these have been included. The rationale for these should



engage with academic literature and established good practice in monitoring, evaluation, and learning in the remote context, and include an outline of strengths and limitations.

A Data Management Plan will be developed that describes how data collected for the monitoring framework will be entered, stored, and analysed, and deals with matters of data ownership, sharing, security and access. This must meet privacy requirements, including the Australian Privacy Principles. Given the proportion of remote job seekers that identify as First Nations, data arrangements should reflect the [Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data](#) and the [Maiam Nayri Wingara Data Sovereignty principles](#).

New remote employment service evaluation

Consistent with the Employment White Paper's principle that reforms are grounded in evidence, high-quality evaluation and continuous learning and improvement. The NIAA will continuously monitor the performance of the new remote employment service, and recalibrate the program settings, delivery and performance model to generate better outcomes where possible, within the existing overarching policy settings and funding envelope.

An initial evaluation plan will be developed ahead of program commencement. A whole-of-new remote employment service evaluation will occur prior to 1 July 2027 to inform any future design principles.

The evaluation will focus on implementation of the new program and a preliminary assessment of the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the program. It will include robust performance monitoring including data and evidence to be collected throughout implementation. Any substantial structural changes that may be identified as a result of the evaluation will form an evidence base for the next iteration of remote employment following the first phase of the new remote employment service.

Consultation

To ensure evaluation activities provide meaningful insights about the programs, the NIAA is working in partnership with the First Nations Reference Group and other key stakeholders on how we measure success and evaluate the programs. This includes other Commonwealth agencies such as the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Social Services, remote communities, the NIAA's Indigenous Evaluation Committee and other advisory groups as required.

This engagement is informing design of monitoring, evaluation and learning activities, to ensure the program meets its stated objectives and supports individual, community and business needs and priorities. Consultations on program design and implementation include talking to communities to understand what data and evidence is needed and how data can be used to share insights and information on outcomes with communities. Monitoring and evaluation activities are being designed to align with and support the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, including Priority Reform 1 (Formal partnerships and shared decision making) and Priority Reform 4 (Shared access to data and information at a regional level).



The evaluation is likely to consider appropriateness and effectiveness of the RJED program and new remote employment service and may consider both impacts on employment outcomes and impacts on other outcomes at the individual and community level.

Responsibilities for evaluation

The NIAA will oversee the design and implementation of the MEL framework for both the RJED program and the new remote employment service. The NIAA is engaging external experts to provide specialist advice on monitoring, evaluation and learning for the programs. This will include the design, development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation strategies including collection, management and analysis of data, reporting and assessment.

Funding for the RJED evaluation was committed in the 2034-24 Budget and funding for the new remote employment service is subject to agreement by Government.

Key objectives and intended outcomes of program evaluation

The evaluation approach is designed to enable the NIAA to measure success against the program objectives as outlined in Chapter 2. Evaluation approaches are under development at the time of drafting this Impact Analysis and are subject to change as program details are further refined.

Broadly, evaluation activities will use a mixed methods approach including both qualitative and quantitative data sources. Several main data sources will be required including:

- Grant recipient reporting on activities and participants
- NIAA administrative data on grant implementation
- Participant surveys or other method of collecting information on participants' experiences
- Collection of new primary data on community-level and social outcomes, and
- Other sources identified by working in partnership with key stakeholders.

Existing data sources will also be leveraged where possible, including other administrative data collected by other Government agencies where appropriate. Precise needs and frequency will be determined based on consultations with communities and other stakeholders. The NIAA will oversee these processes however some elements will be undertaken by external providers where specialist expertise is required.

Measures of success

The NIAA has sought views on what success for the RJED program and a new remote employment service might mean from a range of stakeholders. While they are still under development, the proposed measures of success are outlined below:

RJED program measures of success

- All 3,000 new jobs are embedded within communities and created by 2026-27.
- Local community members are employed in RJED funded jobs.



- Jobs approved through the RJED grant align with regional allocation methodology.
- There is a focus on youth with a portion of jobs (to be determined) allocated to youth.
- Organisations are properly resourced through the CJBF.
- Government administration is streamlined and responsive to communities.
- Increases in local employment in remote communities.
- The jobs created reflect community needs and aspirations.
- The RJED program contributes to the long-term economic, social and cultural development of communities.

New remote employment service measures of success

- A grant process is effectively undertaken to engage new remote employment service providers.
- Providers are trained to deliver the new remote employment service.
- Participant assessment models and their application are improved.
- The new remote employment service is flexible and responsive to local circumstances and community needs.
- The new remote employment service adopts a case-management approach to provide tailored support to remote job seekers.

The above measures of success and key performance indicators are not exhaustive and will be refined through outcomes of further consultation with FNRG, communities and other key stakeholders. The NIAA will also seek views and lessons learned about evaluation approaches used in other key programs, such as the New Jobs Program Trial (NJPT).



Appendix A - Trials

CDP Trials

On 31 August 2022, the former Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP, hosted a Remote Employment Roundtable in the lead up to the Jobs and Skills Summit and announced that CDP providers would be given flexibility to re-direct around 25 per cent of their funding to work with remote communities to trial new approaches to real jobs. These CDP Trials are designed to shift provider focus from work-like activities towards real jobs while a new program to replace CDP is developed.

Phase 1 of the CDP Trials ran from November 2022 to June 2023 and provided flexibility to fund jobs through programs and services that communities identified as needed. Phase 1 of the CDP Trials comprised 136 projects across 57 CDP regions and over 5,500 CDP participants benefitted in some way from trial approaches and of these 1,300 attained paid work opportunities. Phase 2 commenced in July 2023 and will run until October 2024.

Reporting for the 12 months from July 2023 to July 2024 showed that more than 12,000 CDP participants had benefitted in some way from CDP Trial projects, and over 2,000 participants had attained paid work opportunities.

Key lessons from Phase 1 of the CDP Trials were:

- Enhanced case management, including mentoring, is a key driver of participant employment success.
- Employers can be wary of taking on participants and prefer their workload and risk to be minimised when employing participants rather than additional financial compensation.
- Establishing a new community enterprise requires significant support from providers, staff with genuine experience and acumen, as well as time for ‘proof of concept’.
- Award wages and vouchers are effective drivers of participant engagement, but participants are nervous about increased income risking much-needed social security benefits.
- A new model will need to be flexible, developed in partnership with strong community stakeholders.

Learnings from the first six months of Phase 2 of the CDP Trials are:

- Employment subsidies are a ‘win-win’ opportunity – giving job seekers paid opportunities to build valuable skills and lowering risks for employers – but many employers remain wary about taking on participants.
- Although not as effective as award wages, financial incentives helped foster consistent participation from participants; however chronically disengaged participants are often more motivated by community service.
- More flexible case management approaches, such as frequent and informal engagement and mentoring, are particularly effective at increasing participant confidence and engagement.



- Evidence is growing that providers with strong business management capabilities and adequate time are able to establish effective social enterprises, but greater support for business planning is required.
- Providers continue to struggle to consistently engage young participants, although leveraging peer influence through group-based activities has seen some success.

Learnings from the CDP Trials have identified limitations to CDP providers' effectiveness in addressing the significant barriers that participants face. To be successful in training and employment, participants generally require more intensive case management – such as increased level and regularity of support, or more wrap-around services – than what CDP providers have historically provided. CDP providers are often unable to fill all the local services gaps – such as education, mental or physical health services – necessary to address participants' barriers. It remains difficult to bring culturally appropriate Registered Training Organisations to remote communities, with participant attendance often inconsistent.

Evidence from the CDP Trials indicate additional barriers to employment participation in the care sector, such as jobseekers' ability to obtain required documentation (working with vulnerable people checks) and ability or willingness to complete specific training or certifications relating to care and support roles. We heard through trial feedback that in many cases Registered Training Organisations were able to provide services in remote areas, however, there were many layers of barriers preventing jobseeker participation, including limited Standard English language and literacy skills.

Hiring organisations have also been reported to have limited appropriate supports for remote job seekers which curtails workforce integration and participation in the long-term. Evidence from the CDP Trials indicates that many remote employers have a deep-seated wariness to employing CDP participants, often due to poor prior experiences over many years. Some employers choose to close their doors rather than take on (even fully subsidised) CDP participants if they have staff shortages. During community consultations across remote Australia, stakeholders reported that businesses have not been able to adequately leverage opportunities through the CDP and there is a need to develop a strategy to incentivise local business participation, in order to generate more local jobs and support associated administrative, training and development costs.²³

The CDP has also been criticised for being a top-down approach and too centrally controlled by government systems and decision making. As part of initial consultations that took place with communities from February 2023 – June 2023, communities said that insufficient effort has been directed at creating jobs through community-based organisations, and through community-led approaches. Communities also said they have less control and ability to participate in local decision-making processes to determine workforce/community priorities, and fewer resources to support participants into jobs, targeted training or other employment initiatives. They also identified a missed opportunity in creating jobs that are culturally valued, as there is a considerable amount of work being done in communities that is not recognised through mainstream employment.

²³ Cross Cultural Consultants. (2023). Replacing CDP Final Report. p11



Communities also indicated that the success of programs in regional and remote areas depends on community empowerment, participation and ownership of the programs and funding allocated to them. Community-driven approaches allow for programs to be more adaptive to local conditions, consider cultural nuances that impact on people and their ability to participate in the community and local economy, and ultimately deliver services that are holistic and comprehensive with regard to community needs, priorities and capabilities.²⁴

It is clear from these results that the objectives of the CDP are not meeting community expectations, which led to the Government’s commitment to a new program in remote Australia with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions.²⁵

The CDP Trials have proven a valuable opportunity to better understand how people receiving unemployment benefits in remote parts of Australia can be supported into work. In the second phase of CDP Trials, CDP Providers have reported that 61 per cent of projects led to a ‘strong’ or ‘very strong’ improvement of participant engagement in CDP. There were 14.9 per cent more job placements in CDP during the first six months of the second phase, compared with the same period twelve months prior. Nearly 1,300 participants attained paid work opportunities in the second phase, building on around 1,100 participants in the first phase. The following quotes attest to the positive experiences reflected by key CDP Trial participants/stakeholders:²⁶

“My family is really proud of me and has noticed my personal growth since starting this journey.”

– CDP Participant, Cooktown QLD

“As an employer it is handy to be offered a subsidized wage to spend the extra time training and encouraging and supporting an Indigenous worker with work experience. Hopefully the work experience will lead to full time employment in the future. There is a shortage of workers in Kununurra and this model may prepare someone to be ‘work ready’ and acquire skills they may not be able to acquire otherwise.”

– Host employer, Kununurra WA

²⁴ Cross Cultural Consultants. (2023). Replacing CDP Final Report. p7

²⁵ NIAA & Keogh Bay. (2023). NIAA Remote Employment Monitoring Evidence and Learning Project: Interim Report – Early Learnings Synthesis. p24

²⁶ NIAA. (2023). *Community Development Program: phase 1 trials*. Pp 3-5. <https://www.niaa.gov.au/resource-centre/synthesis-early-learnings-trial-pathways-real-jobs>



“I feel that I am more confident and prouder of myself for getting the job. I was surprised at my commitment to going to work each day and I find it hard to stay at home now...I feel it is good for my kids to see mum out working and I want to be a good role model for them...”

– CDP Participant, Hermannsburg NT

New Jobs Program Trial

The New Jobs Program Trial opened in September 2023 and provides up to 300 jobs with real wages, and proper conditions in targeted CDP regions. Under this trial, community organisations and local governments are funded to employ local people at the National Minimum Wage to work on projects aligned with community priorities. Funding includes provision of the acquisition for small-scale capital; hiring of vehicles, plant and equipment; small scale consumables and supervision. As of May 2024 there were 19 applications approved for 163 jobs.

This trial has successfully met the consultation needs of stakeholders, thereby meeting the election commitment to be designed in partnership with First Nations people. Lessons learned from the New Jobs Program Trial revealed the need for a simpler application process; for the purchase of plant, equipment and vehicles as hiring services are not often available; and that some participants (employees) had an expectation of award wages which left a shortfall that employers had to cover.

Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trial

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trial in CDP region 3 is testing ideas and trialling new approaches to remote employment services focused on the unique circumstances in very remote regions of Australia that are a significant distance from a regional centre. Specifically, this trial has tested a legislated supplementary payment of \$190 per fortnight for participants engaging in a work like placement for 15 hours per week.

Key feedback from this trial indicates that more flexibility is needed in working arrangements and eligibility requirements to encourage participation and job seekers want access to real job opportunities.

Lessons learned

Some common lessons learned emerging from the CDP Trials, the New Jobs Program Trial and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trial include:

- The importance of flexible working arrangements and eligibility requirements which need to be set at appropriate levels to ensure broad participation.
- A new program will need to be developed in close partnership with community stakeholders.
- Participants are nervous about increased income (from a job) impacting their eligibility for much needed broader social-security benefits (housing, health care cards etc);
- There is a strong desire by participants to be able to work on a part-time or casual basis, rather than full-time.



- There are key interdependencies in implementing a remote employment program, which are often beyond the scope of the program’s policy settings, for example, health services, training providers, IT connectivity, logistics and supply chains. These challenges can delay implementation and cause progress to be slow.
- Obtaining work clearances like ‘Blue Card’ or the equivalent working with vulnerable people card continues to be a significant barrier for qualified participants to obtain employment. More flexibility in these clearances is needed through practical solutions developed in partnership with State and Territory governments.

Through the learnings, insights, evidence and advice received from stakeholders, Government is considering all feedback to inform the design of the RJED program and new remote employment service to replace the CDP.

