

# INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT



EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES  
INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT  
AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ISSUE SHEET

*The Democrats believe that a job is the best antidote to poverty and the most effective road to participation in a civil society. Generally, employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians have not kept up with the growth of the working age population.*

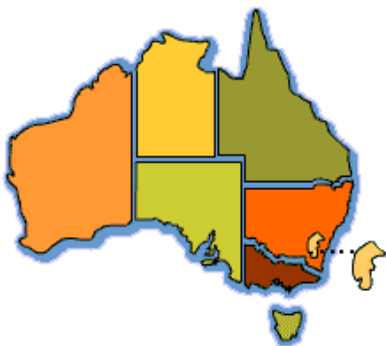


Photo: [www.workplace.gov.au](http://www.workplace.gov.au)

Unemployment of all Australians is currently at 5.7% but Indigenous unemployment is 20%. If you also include those participants in the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP- the Indigenous 'work for the dole' scheme) the true unemployment figure is around 41%.

53% of Indigenous people in rural areas earn their income through CDEP. The Democrats recognise the important role that CDEP plays in providing employment for Indigenous people but it has become a way of life for generations-not just the temporary measure it should be.

## We Call for Changes to CDEP, Including:

- Operational funding raised to at least the same levels as those provided to 'Work for the Dole' schemes;
- participants being able to access working credits and training credits in the same way as mainstream job seekers;

- participants employed in public sector jobs moving into the full employment conditions of that position and not being retained on CDEP wages;
- recompense of CDEP for services delivered on behalf of government departments;
- Extension of CDEP to other possible occupations, for example the Arts; and,
- A review of CDEP and other Indigenous employment programs, to assess the extent to which these programs and services lead to on-going, paid employment, and also assess the extent to which the CDEP participants undertake work that would normally be performed by workers employed on an on-going basis at award or equivalent wages.

The Democrats recognise the important role that Indigenous community organisations and Government departments play in providing employment for Indigenous people but Governments must create benchmarks in this area of Indigenous disadvantage.

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Indigenous people are less likely than other Australians to be employed by the private sector. The Democrats believe that the private sector have a responsibility here to overcome stereotypes and continue to increase its employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

## The Democrats Encourage:



Photo: [www.cqrcdep.org](http://www.cqrcdep.org)

- Peak organisations in the private sector and individual employers to establish targets and/or strategies for employing more Indigenous Peoples and require staff at all levels to undergo Indigenous cultural awareness training;
- national and regional peak private sector organisations, local chambers of commerce and local and Indigenous employers to build business contacts and networks with Indigenous businesses, especially in their start-up phase;

- banks and other financial institutions to adopt culturally responsive banking and financing regimes, including the establishment of Indigenous specific financial institutions to assist Indigenous Peoples' access to business capital, and greater access to financial assistance for self-employed Indigenous Peoples, such as micro-financing schemes;
- financial incentives similar to the US 'New Markets Tax Credit Program', which encourage investment in otherwise unsustainable markets and thereby stimulate local ventures and regional economies. This is most needed in Indigenous communities because of their severe economic and social distress;

- governments and financial institutions, including *Indigenous Business Australia* (former CDC) and the Indigenous Land Corporation, to collaborate to enhance the availability of equity, and working and venture capital for Indigenous businesses; and,
- enhanced access to electronic and communication technologies that will enable Indigenous businesses in remote locations to compete more effectively.

It is also essential that educational and training outcomes and opportunities available to Indigenous Peoples are improved in recognition that education is the key to economic and social empowerment.



Other issue sheets are available online or can be requested via e-mail or telephone:

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