

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION

Policy on the Community Development and Employment Projects (CDEP) Scheme for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

As adopted at the
2007 Annual Federal Conference

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1. Preamble

The Australian Education Union (AEU) encourages initiatives that support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians to achieve economic independence. In this respect the AEU recognises the potential of programmes such as the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) and the benefits it may bring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The AEU further supports initiatives that develop the skills and future employment prospects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in order for them to move off CDEP to ongoing employment that meet their needs and that of their communities. The AEU notes that CDEP employees are working within schools and TAFE has worked in positive partnerships with organisations that deliver CDEP. The AEU supports lobbying Governments to respond more effectively to the employment of CDEP workers in schools which includes the development and implementation of training plans, career pathways and transition to full employment.

2. Purpose and Context

At its June 2006 meeting ATSIEC noted that the current Australian Education Union (AEU) Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Policy requires updating to reflect changes to CDEP. These changes include who manages the CDEP Programme and who has responsibility for funding and contract management including monitoring and reporting of CDEP organisations' activities. The AEU Federal Executive at its November 2006 meeting endorsed the recommendation that the AEU CDEP Policy be reviewed.

The AEU CDEP Policy was adopted at the 2004 Annual Conference at a time when the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) had carriage for the scheme.

On 16 March 2005 Parliament passed the ATSIC Amendment Bill repealing provisions of the ATSIC Act, and in particular abolishing ATSIC. The legislation received the Royal Assent and was proclaimed with effect from 24 March 2005. The legislation also provided that Regional Councils cease on 30 June 2005.

The Federal Government transferred responsibility for ATSIC programs and services to mainstream agencies from 1 July 2004 with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations receiving responsibility for carriage of CDEP.

3. Scope and Purpose

- 3.1. CDEP employees are working within schools on an ongoing casual basis. There are cases where CDEP employees have worked for up to seven years at the same school on a casual basis with no access to entitlements such as leave and superannuation.
- 3.2. There are increasing reports of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are leaving school early in order to work in the CDEP scheme.
- 3.3. Although there have been recent improvements in relation to the alignment of the CDEP scheme with training and employment opportunities and outcomes, for example in the creation of Indigenous Employment Centres and incentives schemes, the CDEP scheme is seen in some cases as not aligned closely enough with real training and employment opportunities.
- 3.4. There are some positive models where TAFE Institutes are working in partnership with CDEP organisations. These models need to be shared in a systemic way.
- 3.5. Some schools have been reported to have transferred the salaries of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees off the global school budget and on to the CDEP scheme.
- 3.6. Many CDEP organisations are not resourced adequately to enable them to comply with their obligations under the relevant awards.
- 3.7. In some communities, the highest paid Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander worker in a school is paid on CDEP. This sends the message to students that CDEP is a career to 'aspire' to.
- 3.8. As CDEP organisations are paid per participant, there is no real incentive for organisations to move people from the scheme in to full-time employment.
- 3.9. Many community-based projects, where people should be paid full-time award wages are funded through CDEP. These employees should be employed in a full-time capacity and paid under the relevant award.

4. The AEU Position

- 4.1 The AEU believes that:
 - a. there is an over reliance on CDEP funding to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in some public schools in Australia;
 - b. partnerships between public schools, TAFE Institutes and CDEP organisations should be systematised;
 - c. the CDEP scheme should be seen as a pathway to further training and employment, rather than an end in itself; and

- d. CDEP participants have the right to full employment and receive full award wages and entitlements.
- 4.2 The AEU and its Branches and Associated Bodies will:
- a. Support the ACTU Indigenous Committee in its industrial and political campaign work for CDEP workers;
 - b. Work with ECE centres, schools and TAFE institutes to ensure that there are effective partnerships which produce employment outcomes between the public education system and CDEP centres at a local level;
 - c. Lobby Governments to ensure the development of school-based programs that lead to increased employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
 - d. Work with Principal members in order to highlight the issues in relation to the long-term employment of CDEP workers in schools; and
 - e. Lobby Governments to develop policy responses and explore strategies (including CDEP payments for eligible early school leavers, and partnerships between schools and CDEP organisations) for reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students leaving post-compulsory schooling to participate in the scheme.

Subsumed Policy

The AEU Community Development Employment Projects Policy.

Relevant Policy

The AEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

Glossary

- *ATSIC – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission*
- *ATSIEC – The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee comprising representatives from the General and TAFE Divisions.*
- *CDEP – Community Development Employment Projects. Aimed at providing activities for unemployed Indigenous people that meet community needs and give them a stepping stone to employment outside CDEP.*
- *DEWR – Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations who manages the CDEP Programme and has responsibility for funding and contract management including monitoring and reporting of CDEP organisations' activities.*
- *ECE – Early Childhood Education*
- *Indigenous people – Term used to mean the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders of the Australian mainland and its islands.*
- *Job Network Member (JNM) - Job Network is a national network of private and community organisations dedicated to finding jobs for unemployed people, particularly the long term unemployed.*
- *TSRA – Torres Strait Regional Authority. Manages CDEP in the Torres Strait region.*