



Australian Government

The Future of Remote Participation and Employment Servicing Arrangements

DISCUSSION PAPER

The Future of Remote Participation and Employment Servicing Arrangements: Discussion Paper.

978-0-642-33260-8 [PRINT]

978-0-642-33261-5 [PDF]

978-0-642-33262-2 [RTF]



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The document must be attributed as The Future of Remote Participation and Employment Servicing Arrangements: Discussion Paper.

FOREWORD

The Government is committed to improving remote participation and employment services. We want to see better results for people in remote communities, many of whom are Indigenous Australians.

We recognise that in remote areas there are often complex barriers to employment. Employment services that are well suited to urban and regional areas may not address the issues specific to remote Australia.

New remote participation and employment services arrangements, due to be in place by 1 July 2013, should be simpler, more integrated and more flexible than existing arrangements.

At the core of the new arrangements will be the expectation that people who can work should work.

Many people in remote areas lack the skills and work experience they need to get and hold a job. The new arrangements will recognise that these people need assistance.

The Government also knows that in most remote communities there are more job seekers than there are jobs. The new arrangements will address the need to build and develop remote economies so that local employment opportunities can grow.

Improving remote participation and employment services arrangements is part of a broader strategy to ensure that Indigenous Australians have the same opportunities as all Australians – to get an education, find a job, start their own business, own their own home and provide for their families.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to seek your views on future arrangements for remote participation and employment services. We welcome your feedback and encourage all Australians with an involvement in remote regions to get involved in the consultation process.



Senator the Hon Mark Arbib

Minister for Indigenous
Employment and Economic
Development
Minister for Social Housing and
Homelessness
Minister for Sport



The Hon Jenny Macklin MP

Minister for Families, Housing,
Community Services and
Indigenous Affairs



The Hon Kate Ellis MP

Minister for Employment
Participation and Childcare
Minister for the Status of Women

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government believes that all Australians should have the opportunity to experience the social and financial benefits that come with a job.

Where people are able to work they should be working. Where people are unable to work they should have access to meaningful participation activities that benefit them and their community.

The Government recognises that in remote areas there are often complex barriers to employment. Overcoming these barriers will require a mix of place-based employment services, job creation activities, and participation requirements.

We want to develop a new model for remote participation and employment services. New remote participation and employment services arrangements, due to be in place by 1 July 2013, should be simpler, more integrated and more flexible than existing arrangements.

We want to hear your views on what is working with the current services. We want to take what is working to build better participation and employment services for remote Australia.

A Remote Participation and Employment Services Engagement Panel has been established to provide expert advice on effective engagement of remote communities and on the development of simpler more integrated participation and employment services.

There will be consultation forums with communities, service providers, employers and other stakeholders during August and September as well as an opportunity to contribute through written submissions.

Details on how people can contribute their views on remote participation and employment services arrangements are contained in the section *How to Have Your Say*.

While consultations are underway, the Government is extending existing Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) funding deeds and Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) funding agreements until 30 June 2013.

CONTEXT

There are around 500 000 people living in remote Australia and of these approximately 125 000 are Indigenous Australians. There are 2000 remote and predominantly Indigenous communities in Australia.

Remote Indigenous communities face a range of challenges.

They often have varied and complex needs, and there may be limited access to employment opportunities or meaningful participation activities.

There are a significant number of people in remote communities with disability. Often these disabilities are undisclosed and people do not get the help they need.

Low levels of literacy and numeracy also act as a particular barrier to employment and participation.

In many remote communities there is a limited economy and labour market and there are few job opportunities available.

Long-term reliance on income support can undermine individual capabilities and further entrench disadvantage. The focus for governments and individuals in remote areas is therefore on building individual capabilities, including foundational skills, improving employment services to get more people in remote locations into jobs and creating meaningful participation activities.

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING

The Australian Government is committed to Closing the Gap to improve the lives of all Indigenous Australians, including those in remote communities. As part of this strategy the Government is delivering improved services in areas including health, education and housing to improve life expectancy and opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

Our agenda to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage is driven by three important imperatives:

- » to overcome decades of under-investment in services and infrastructure
- » to encourage and support personal responsibility as the foundation for healthy, functional families and communities and
- » to build new understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Major reforms and unprecedented investment have been made in education, health, employment, remote housing and services, governance and infrastructure.

Clear targets have been set to close the gap in life expectancy, early childhood, health, education and employment, and building blocks are in place to focus effort for sustained change. An independent and regular reporting framework has been established through the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council to make sure that governments at every level are accountable.

The Government is also making significant progress in improving people's lives in the Northern Territory. The Government is undertaking consultations with Northern Territory Indigenous communities on future plans to tackle disadvantage with a particular focus on improved education for children, expanded employment opportunities and tackling alcohol abuse.

We have released a discussion paper, *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory*, and this is the basis of consultations in remote communities, regional centres and town camps in the Northern Territory.

The Government is supporting efforts to support increased personal and economic wellbeing of Indigenous Australians through its Indigenous Economic

Development Strategy. The Strategy sets out a long-term agenda for Indigenous economic participation that will guide government decision-making and program development through to 2018. It recognises some of the specific challenges for economic development in remote communities. For example, in remote and very remote locations access to education can be limited, jobs can be scarce and infrastructure can be undeveloped. Increasing Indigenous economic participation in these areas is about identifying new opportunities (for example, in the mining sector) and maximising Indigenous employment in the existing labour market. Removing barriers to genuine commercial ventures is crucial for ensuring that private sector opportunities grow in remote locations to complement public-sector services and jobs.

The Government is also working with Indigenous leaders to open up new economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians through the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI). The CFI is a carbon offsets scheme that will provide new economic opportunities for farmers, forest growers and landholders and help the environment by reducing carbon pollution. Farmers and land managers will be able to generate credits that can then be sold to other businesses wanting to offset their own carbon pollution.

The Government is providing a \$22 million Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund. This will support Indigenous CFI projects. Opportunities under the CFI for reducing carbon emissions include traditional fire management practices to reduce carbon pollution and earn carbon credits, feral animal management, establishing or managing vegetation to increase carbon storage, reducing livestock emissions on pastoral properties, and increasing the amount of carbon stored in soils.

EXISTING REMOTE PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Government has delivered major reforms to the employment services sector.

The reforms have been about making sure that job seekers receive the level of support they need to get a job.

They have also been about making sure that CDEP focuses on getting people ready for work and is not a destination in its own right. The Government wants people to aspire to a properly paid job rather than to stay on CDEP.

There are four major participation and employment services provided in remote locations:

- » Job Services Australia (JSA)
- » Disability Employment Services (DES)
- » Indigenous Employment Program (IEP), and
- » Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program.

There is also a range of other vocationally oriented programs supporting people in remote locations, including the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP).

Centrelink occupies a central position in remote Australia. Centrelink is the face of government and is the place people access important government services and income support.

Centrelink is also the common point of access to participation and employment services.

JSA is a national network of over 300 providers dedicated to helping job seekers to find and sustain employment. JSA provides support for all job seekers, including those who have recently lost their job, and remote and disadvantaged job seekers. JSA provides opportunities for training, skills development, work experience and tailored assistance. JSA providers are located in more than 2000 towns, cities, and rural and remote sites across Australia.

DES provides job seekers with disability access to tailored services that are flexible and responsive to both their needs and those of employers. Under DES job seekers have access to two distinct programs:

- » Disability Management Service – for job seekers with disability, injury or health conditions who require the assistance of a disability employment service but are not expected to need long-term support in the workplace
- » Employment Support Service – for job seekers with permanent disability and with an assessed need for more long-term, regular support in the workplace.

Under DES job seekers can be supported in the workplace and provided with on-going support.

IEP assists employers recruit, train and provide employment to Indigenous Australians. Under IEP communities, industries and employers are able to access flexible packages of assistance to suit their needs. This includes:

- » pre-employment and post-placement training and mentoring support
- » training and cadetships
- » wage subsidies
- » support for Indigenous business, including self employment
- » work focused literacy and numeracy assistance
- » promoting the success of peer role models, and
- » support for Indigenous job seekers and their families wishing to relocate.

CDEP strengthens Indigenous communities and supports Indigenous people in remote areas through community development and participation opportunities that develop skills, improve capacity, work readiness and employability and links with local priorities. CDEP operates in remote areas and CDEP providers work in partnership with JSA, DES and IEP providers.

There are two main ways that CDEP providers assist Indigenous job seekers:

- » Community Development – consisting of participation in Community Development Projects linked to community priorities identified in community plans and Development and Support Funding focusing on supporting and developing Indigenous individuals, communities and organisations, and

- » Work Readiness Services – which includes training and work experience to help job seekers develop their skills, improve their chances of getting a job, and move to work outside of CDEP.

As of 31 March 2011 there were over 32 000 job seekers registered with JSA in remote Australia, comprising around 4 per cent of the total JSA caseload. Eighty-five (85) per cent were Indigenous job seekers. There were over 1200 remote job seekers registered with DES and over 10 500 people participating in CDEP.

The Government has been working to forge better links between CDEP providers, employment service providers and Centrelink in remote communities. Employment service providers and CDEP organisations now need to work closely to ensure job seekers receive work experience and training, and take part in other participation projects.

Under a pilot program in nine selected remote Indigenous communities, Centrelink is conducting joint interviews with job seekers and their employment service providers. The trial is designed to increase job seeker engagement and understanding of participation requirements and to provide appropriate and supported referral options.

LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT APPROACH

The Government recognises that while the current market-driven employment services are suited to urban and regional Australia, they do not adequately address the issues specific to remote Australia.

Services can be fragmented and their goals are not always aligned. Programs can be inflexible and unresponsive to community needs and aspirations. In some cases services within communities are delivered by several different providers. This can be confusing for the communities and the people living in them.

There is also evidence of underutilisation of CDEP program places.

Recent changes are designed to address some of these issues.

The Government's *Building Australia's Future Workforce*, announced in the 2011-12 Budget, provided a range of measures to improve employment services, particularly for the disadvantaged. These changes included:

- » \$133.3 million to support around 150 000 very long term unemployed people (who have been with JSA for two years or more) to undertake job training, Work for the Dole and other activity requirements for 11 months of the year
- » \$94.6 million to provide a wage subsidy of around \$6000 for 6 months to employers to take on and retain people who have been on income support for two years or more, benefitting around 35 000 individuals
- » \$49.8 million to better identify job seekers who persistently have trouble meeting their job search responsibilities and are at risk of disengaging from services
- » \$67.6 million to further support the provision of literacy and numeracy and other foundation skills for unemployed young people
- » \$50.7 million to support 6400 Indigenous youth to get a school-based traineeship under the Indigenous Youth Career Pathways Program, and

- » \$6.1 million to increase the flexibility for employment services providers to secure outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers in remote areas and pilot the provision of culturally appropriate mentoring support for Indigenous job seekers.

Since 1 July 2011 JSA providers in remote locations have been required to refer Indigenous job seekers to CDEP projects or services if places are available and where there is no other employment, training or suitable activities available.

MOVING TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH

The Government wants to develop a new model for remote participation and employment services. The principles underpinning a new model should be that it be simpler, more integrated and more flexible than existing arrangements.

Remote communities and the people who live in them are extremely diverse. A new, tailored approach to participation and employment services for remote Australia needs to be able to respond to emerging local economic opportunities.

It also needs to better support communities to develop economically and create jobs.

It is important to recognise that there is no quick fix to overcoming the problems in remote communities. It will take time and a commitment from all parties to work together to deliver lasting improvements.

Lasting progress in Indigenous economic participation requires fundamental changes to the way we work together. A collaborative approach between employers (from corporate through to small-to-medium enterprises), all levels of governments, the community sector and Indigenous Australians is needed to build Indigenous employment and success for Indigenous Australians in the workplace.

The first vital step in reforming remote participation and employment services is to talk with people about what they think will work best in their community.

We welcome views on how remote participation and employment services can be improved. We know that better services can only be built in partnership with communities and Indigenous people, because the issues we want to tackle are the issues which they confront every single day.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can we provide services in a better way?

Simpler and more integrated services

The Government believes that services can be improved through better integrating assistance for people in remote areas.

An integrated participation and employment service would need to be flexible enough to operate in all communities and meet the needs of all job seekers.

The mix of services provided on the ground should be able to vary from community to community, depending on the strength of the local demand for jobs. In some communities the emphasis will be on building community capacity and economic development. In communities with stronger labour markets the focus could be more on getting people into jobs.

The servicing model also needs to be flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances. For example, should new employment opportunities emerge, the emphasis should be able to shift towards helping people gain the skills they need to secure the jobs.

One option would involve bringing the employment services now provided by JSA and DES, under one umbrella. The integration of services could be taken further by also incorporating participation activities. The IEP, or elements of it, could also be included as could other services such as language, literacy and numeracy training.

Combining CDEP into the new service would strengthen its ability to service communities in which job opportunities are limited or non-existent and where people wanted to contribute to building their communities.

The Government believes a more integrated approach can also bring substantial efficiencies that can deliver better servicing in remote areas.

A single provider

A characteristic of the current arrangements is that there can be a number of providers servicing a community who are delivering similar services. Given the unique circumstances of remote communities, this can be confusing for people and can lead to inefficiencies.

It might be simpler for all participation and employment services in a community to be delivered by a single provider. This would give people one point of contact. A single provider might comprise partnerships between existing providers and communities.

A single provider approach may also result in better provider presence in communities. Ideally this would mean a permanent presence in communities and more frequent servicing.

Any new service should be flexible enough to encourage providers and communities to be innovative. The success of this approach should also be measured on how well better ways of doing things are adopted in communities.

The importance of economic development

The Government believes that focusing on economic development is important for creating lasting jobs in remote communities. For effective and sustainable change to occur it is essential that communities be empowered to identify issues and solutions in partnership with industry and governments at all levels.

Economic development can play an important role in improving the prosperity of remote Indigenous Australians. Economic development plans could form a part of the new arrangements. Economic development plans could focus on a range of key areas, such as:

- » education and building the capacity of individuals
- » creating and realising job opportunities
- » business and enterprise development, and
- » creating the incentives and environment for full Indigenous economic participation.

Any plans would build on existing arrangements, for example, Local Implementation Plans.

Approaches to economic development are dependent on location. In remote locations economic development is about identifying new opportunities (such as emerging industries), supporting access to existing opportunities in employment and business, removing barriers to genuine commercial ventures, and looking at ways to maximise community economic and social returns on government investment.

We want employment service providers to work more closely with employers and local communities to increase the local jobs base so that when and where jobs become available they can be filled locally.

Governments can also play an important role in facilitating partnerships and ensuring that the ground rules for economic activity create the incentives to maximise economic participation.

The Government could seek to increase Indigenous employment in remote communities by using its contracts and procurement processes to encourage the use of local labour.

The Government, in partnership with employers, businesses and local communities wants to:

- » encourage employers to develop productive partnerships with Indigenous Australians and local employment service providers to increase Indigenous employment, particularly in emerging and growth industries like resources and mining, tourism and green jobs
- » improve access to finance to support Indigenous business start-ups and business growth
- » better align Indigenous business support programs to provide a client-centred, business-focused approach to supporting initiatives
- » increasing private sector engagement and partnerships with Indigenous businesses to increase the role of Indigenous business in the Australian economy, and
- » increase the use of Indigenous employment and businesses through Government procurement to maximise Indigenous economic outcomes from Government investment.

In remote areas, joint ventures and enterprise partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses can help capitalise on areas of comparative advantage.

Strengthening job opportunities

One possible pathway might be for communities to start up a social enterprise or business that has potential to generate income and employment.

Social enterprise could play a role in providing opportunities, promoting independence and assisting in community economic development. Social enterprises could focus on services for communities that do not currently exist and provide training and development for community members to become employed in these enterprises.

Employment in social enterprises may be preferred to Work for the Dole and other work experience activities as it has an economic basis and more closely resembles work.

The role of Centrelink

The Government believes that Centrelink can play a vital role in supporting remote communities.

Centrelink has a presence in approximately 300 rural and remote communities across Australia, and will continue to be responsible for the delivery of services in these communities, such as the payment of income support and the Centrepay bill paying service.

Centrelink offers a wide and growing range of services provided through Remote Access Centres, Agents, Access Points, and Remote Servicing Teams.

Providing tailored services that connect customers to the right assistance, at the right time, has been proven to support workforce participation.

As outlined above, Centrelink is working with employment service providers, piloting a trial of joint interview servicing arrangements of job seekers in nine selected remote Indigenous communities. Joint interviews help to identify barriers to employment such as low levels of literacy and numeracy, and assist job seekers to be referred to appropriate services for support. Joint interviews also make sure participation obligations are understood by job seekers.

We want to know whether joint interviews should be expanded to all remote communities.

The Government is interested in hearing how Centrelink can better support remote communities. There may be further opportunities for increased cooperation between Centrelink, other service providers and people in remote Indigenous communities.

How can we provide services in a better way? **- Discussion Points:**

How could existing participation and employment services be better combined and simplified so they are flexible enough to operate in different community settings?

How can governments at all levels work better together to ensure that services delivered in remote communities support jobs, participation and economic development?

Should participation and employment services be delivered by a single provider in each location?

How can communities and employers better engage with Government to support economic development?

How can economic development plans help communities create the incentives to maximise economic participation?

How should social enterprises be established in the community? Should they be community driven in partnership with service providers?

How can we encourage providers to work better with employers and the community to increase the number of jobs in the community?

Should joint interviews be extended to all remote communities?

What services could be provided by Centrelink and how can Centrelink work better with other providers to support participation in remote communities?

2. How can we improve results for people?

Matching services with community and individual need

The new model should be flexible enough to assist people with participation requirements in each community.

There needs to be a range of activities for remote Australia supporting two broad approaches: one that provides skills essential for job readiness; and another that requires participation and builds social and life skills that contribute to a thriving community.

The Government believes that the mix between participation and employment services should depend on the situation in individual communities.

In many remote communities there are more people who want to work than there are jobs. In these communities it might be more effective to direct effort and resources into participation activities and building community capacity and economic development. These activities would aim to keep people active and engaged, create new jobs, and make the community a better place to live. This might mean focusing on activities that are of lasting economic and social benefit to the community. For example, communities might be able to use funding from a variety of sources to invest in community infrastructure and create jobs.

In those communities with stronger labour markets the focus could be more on getting people into jobs. Even in these communities, however, it needs to be recognised that many people do not have the foundational skills needed to gain and hold a job. Greater emphasis might need to be placed on foundational skills such as developing work habits, learning personal responsibility, gaining inter-personal skills and achieving a good standard of literacy and numeracy to get and hold down a job.

New arrangements should also deliver improved pre-employment and post-placement support (such as vocational training, in-job mentoring, help with basic life and work skills, and career planning) so that people can be helped to obtain and hold onto jobs.

The mix of participation and employment services in any community would be expected to vary over time. For example, if job opportunities expand then the emphasis would need to be flexible enough to switch to more of an employment focus. The balance could also move in the opposite direction.

The Government is also interested in how to provide better services for people with disability living in remote communities.

Governments at all levels can play an important role in delivering a range of social services that can employ local people. Providers and communities could be encouraged to work with governments to tap into these opportunities.

Labour mobility

People often move to another area to take up a new job or to go to where job prospects are better.

People who are assessed to be job ready but who live in remote communities that lack sufficient suitable job opportunities should have the option of moving to get a job.

People in remote communities often have strong cultural and family links to their communities. The types of jobs people may be more interested in may be jobs where they can regularly return home. This may mean jobs they can access on a fly-in fly-out basis or seasonal work.

A new remote participation and employment services model should provide assistance to people when they need it.

This assistance could range from help to find accommodation; access to transport; assistance with

life skills (such as budgeting, learning to pay rent and utilities) and assistance so that people can stick in jobs when they may be long distances away from family and friends, often for the first time.

Young people

It is important that young people (aged 15–24) living in remote areas have the same opportunities and choices for their future as other young Australians.

The Government believes that young people should, as a priority, remain engaged in either school or training prior to transition to work.

Women

The needs of women in remote regions, particularly Indigenous women, need to be met. Experience shows that women frequently take on constructive roles in fixing problems in their communities.

This role needs to be supported in participation and employment services. For some communities, poor school attendance is a major problem and increasing participation by children in education is an important objective. In these communities there may be a major emphasis on mothers ensuring their children are attending school and are accessing other services, for example health services.

Women are also important role models and pass on life skills to their children. Participation activities for mothers might focus on improving foundational or life skills training (such as parenting skills, financial management, home maintenance and nutrition).

Finding effective incentives to participate

To build an environment where community contribution and engagement is the norm, the Government believes that all people in remote Australia with participation requirements should be required to attend appointments and participation and employment activities. Voluntary participation in activities should also be encouraged for people of working age in receipt of non-activity tested payments.

In the 2011–12 Budget the Government announced a number of measures designed to improve the operation of the job seeker compliance system. These measures continued the Government's focus on balancing the responsibilities for job seekers to demonstrate that they are looking for work or undertaking job preparation activities with providing opportunities and assistance which helps them improve their employment prospects.

The Government wants to make sure that the penalties for people who do not turn up are effective and remains committed to a 'No Show No Pay' approach.

The Government also recognises that what might work in urban and regional Australia is not always directly transferrable to remote communities. It may be that arrangements in remote communities need to also have a focus on motivating and rewarding people to participate.

Income management is currently operating across the Northern Territory and in various trial locations across metropolitan Perth, the Kimberley in Western Australia and Cape York in Queensland. A 2010 evaluation of people participating in the Western Australian trial found most respondents said that income management had improved their lives and those of their families.

In the 2011–12 Budget the Government announced that targeted income management was being introduced in a further five communities, including:

- » Playford (SA)
- » Shepparton (Vic)
- » Bankstown (NSW)
- » Rockhampton (Qld), and
- » Logan (Qld)

The Government is interested in whether income management can play a role in some communities in providing incentives to participate.

Income management helps to protect children and vulnerable people by ensuring that money is available for the essentials of life such as food and clothing, and provides a tool to stabilise people's circumstances, easing immediate financial stress. Under the new model of income management people in employment and study may be exempt from income management.

The Government wants to hear views on whether communities should be given a greater role in determining local approaches to participation and penalties. In some communities a stronger approach relying more on penalties may be effective. In other communities an incentives based approach may be more effective.

How can we improve results for people? – Discussion Points

What participation requirements are appropriate for remote communities?

Are there any participation activities that should be unique to remote communities?

How do we ensure that arrangements are flexible enough to allow services to meet community needs and circumstances as they change?

How can we better provide services for people with disability who are living in remote communities?

What assistance and support would be most effective in helping people in remote communities who want to move to take up jobs and stay in them?

How can young people be supported to remain engaged with education, training and employment?

How can participation and employment services best support the positive role women play in remote areas?

What is the right balance between penalties and rewards for participation in your community?

What are the best ways to motivate people in remote communities to participate?

How do we ensure that participation incentives don't entrench welfare dependency, particularly when jobs are available?

Does income management have a role to play in encouraging participation in some communities?

Who should be responsible for determining participation requirements and penalties?

3. How do we get more community ownership and responsibility?

The Government believes that individual and community responsibility is vital for participation and employment services to be effective and for local innovation to emerge.

We want to hear people's views on how communities can take on a bigger role in resolving their own issues.

The Government believes that families and communities have a particular responsibility to ensure that young people remain engaged in either school or training prior to transition to work. Working closely with schools and services providers will be essential to achieving this.

Agreements between the community and providers and possibly with Government agencies could be used to formalise respective roles and responsibilities.

Other communities might prefer to enter into commercial relationships with providers to ensure that services delivered on the ground meet their needs. Some communities might want to have a greater say in determining participation obligations.

Examples of communities taking the initiative

The Kimberley Ranger Program employs Aboriginal men and women to look after country while equipping them with qualifications in Conservation and Land Management. The Kimberley Land Council facilitates eight full-time ranger groups through the Working On Country program and six emerging rangers groups from across the entire Kimberley region. The program employs more than 50 rangers.

The Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation has formed a partnership with Rio Tinto. Traditional owners in the Pilbara are producing biodiesel by turning waste cooking oil into diesel. The Tom Price-based biodiesel project converts up to 5000 litres of discarded cooking oil a week into useful fuel.

In Ngukurr a new store has opened its doors. The local community contributed \$1.5 million to help replace a hot, dusty old store building. The company, Outback Stores, worked with the Ngukurr Progress Aboriginal Corporation to meet the design and equipment standards of a commercial supermarket. The new store now employs 14 local staff and means improved access to fresh fruit and vegetables.

In the Roper Gulf a young mothers program has been developed that seeks to improve parenting and life skills. Support networks have been established that provide a safe and supportive environment for young mums. The program offers opportunities for young mothers to engage

with the community and rejoin the workforce. It also provides opportunities to refer young mums to a range of other support services and uses a preventative approach to identify and confront potential problems before they materialise.

The Roper Gulf community has also established an annual week long youth camp. The camp focuses primarily on preparation for, and encouragement of, taking up opportunities for an education by attending a boarding house. The program offers engagement and team building activities. At the camp, bonding activities for youth from different communities who may be studying together are offered. The youth camp exposes youth to vocational education and training and other educational opportunities which are not available in communities.

The approach taken in each community would depend on a range of factors, including community needs and capability. Different communities are at different stages of capacity. It might be worthwhile for some resources to be allocated to establishing capacity building and better community governance arrangements.

The Government recognises that within a remote community there may be several or many 'communities'.

How do we get more community ownership and responsibility? – Discussion Points

How should communities have a bigger say in the delivery of participation and employment services?

Should communities have a greater say in determining participation and employment obligations?

How could community capability for taking on these responsibilities be determined?

How might governance arrangements be fostered to enable remote communities to have more say about the services delivered?

How can communities provide support for young people to engage with education, training and employment?

Would community-provider agreements or other arrangements lead to improved results for people living in remote areas?

What is the most appropriate definition of 'community' for the purpose of participation and employment services?

How could individuals who do not wish to be serviced by particular groups or organisations be assisted?

4. Issues for service providers to consider

The primary focus of this discussion paper is to engage with people living in remote Australia. Many of the issues raised above are also of direct interest to providers. There is also a range of issues that are specific to providers of remote participation and employment services.

Assessment

Providers could be given the responsibility of assessing people in the remote communities they service. Providers would determine whether people would benefit from work preparation or whether they require more specialist interventions to overcome serious non-vocational barriers. This approach would mean a fundamental shift away from the current approach which relies on specialist assessments (through Job Capacity Assessments).

Payments to providers

It is likely that payments to providers under a new integrated program could include service fees and outcome payments. The precise structures and amounts would need to be determined when the nature of the program, including performance indicators, becomes clearer.

The current stream servicing approach of JSA could be seen as unnecessarily complex given that most people serviced by JSA providers in remote areas are either Stream 3 or Stream 4 job seekers. A simpler approach might be to fund people at a set level that recognises the highly disadvantaged nature of most people living in remote communities.

Performance management

It is likely that the way the performance of providers is assessed will need to be reviewed. The overall aim would continue to be to get people into jobs. However, specific remote measures may need to be recognised. For example, demonstrated improvements in individual capacities, such as literacy skills, might be more appropriate.

Issues for service providers to consider – Discussion Points:

Would direct assessment by providers improve results for people in remote communities?

Do providers have, or could they build, the capability to undertake these types of assessments?

Are there simpler ways of paying providers who deliver participation and employment services in remote communities?

How should provider performance be measured under a future servicing model?

Should social outcomes be recognised?

HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Consultations:

The Government is undertaking comprehensive consultations with people in remote communities, providers and other stakeholders.

These consultations are taking place in August and September 2011.

Details on the timing and locations of these consultations may be found at:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/rsr>

Submissions:

You may also wish to make a written submission to the review.

It is requested that submissions address the Discussion Points contained in this Discussion Paper.

You may email your submission to the Review at:

remoteservices@deewr.gov.au

Should you wish to make a submission by mail you may post your submission to:

Director
Remote Participation and Employment
Services Review
Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations
Location C50MA4
GPO Box 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Alternatively you may fax your Submission to:

Director
Remote Participation and Employment Services
Review
Department of Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations
Fax: (02) 6276 7791

Closing Date:

Submissions close at 5.00 pm (AEST)
12 October 2011.

Format for Submissions:

Submissions should be in Word format. While there is no word limit we ask that submission be kept brief.

Publishing Submissions:

Publication

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations ('the department') may publish all submissions for public review on the department's website and may include submissions in reports or materials published by the department.

All submissions will be thoroughly reviewed by the department, and this may delay posting to the department's website.

Submissions will be uploaded to the department's website progressively as they become available in an accessible format. Initial records will be provided in RTF (text only) and accompanying accessible PDF versions will then be progressively added where possible.

All submissions will be made public unless the author states in writing that their submission is confidential.

The department reserves the right to edit or redact a submission, or withhold a submission from publication, if it believes that the content of the submission is defamatory, offensive, contravenes anti-discrimination or anti-vilification law or otherwise breaches any law.

Privacy

Personal information collected from submission authors is managed under the Privacy Act 1988. The department will collect personal information from submission authors for the purposes of developing and reviewing a new model for remote participation and employment servicing arrangements. Any personal information collected will only be used by the department for this purpose. By making a submission into the review on remote participation and employment services, you are consenting to the disclosure of your personal information by the department through publication of your submission on the department's website. Personal information within your submission may also be disclosed by the department in related reports or material published by the department. The personal information collected will not otherwise be disclosed without your consent, unless authorised or required by law.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 1982 ('FOI Act') applies to all documents in the possession of the department. The FOI Act gives the Australian community access to information held by the government by providing for a right of access to documents. This includes any submissions provided to the department on the review of remote participation and employment servicing arrangements, including any submissions which have been provided on a confidential basis. A decision regarding access to documents under the FOI Act will be made by an authorised FOI decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

Submissions which are requested under the FOI Act may also be published on the department's disclosure log, in accordance with the publication requirements of the FOI Act.

Copyright

Ownership of all intellectual property rights vest in the author of a submission. The author grants to the Commonwealth a permanent, royalty-free licence to use and adapt material contained in a submission, including publication on the department's website.

Questions:

Should you have any questions please email them to:

remoteservices@deewr.gov.au

We shall endeavour to respond to your question within 2 working days of its receipt.

