



29 January 2016

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Community Development Program) Bill 2015

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is the key union representing employees in the Department of Human Services (DHS) whose role is to administer penalties to job seekers for non-compliance in employment activities after notification by a Community Development Program (CPD) provider.

The CPSU has read and supports the submission by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and agrees with the views expressed therein. CPSU also members wish to provide the following additional information to the Committee:

1. Delivering human services to anyone is complex.
2. For those on the CDP scheme (84% of who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people¹), payments provided through DHS are their primary income. Decisions made to reduce or suspend payments can have a significant detriment to their daily lives. The CPSU shares the significant concerns of the ACTU around the powers proposed to given to the Minister to write the rules relating to benefits. For example, while the payment amount remains the same, according to the Bill, the Minister could make regulations requiring a new activity test.
3. CPSU members working in DHS often raise concerns about customer aggression and it is concern to the CPSU that DHS continues to fail to adequately fund remote access to services and ensure that staff providing the services can do so safely.
4. DHS employees are bound by the Code of Conduct in s13 of the *Public Service Act 1999*. Among other things, this requires them to act with honesty and integrity; avoid conflict of interest; and at all times behave in a way that upholds the Australian Public Service (APS) Values and APS Employment Principles. These principles will not extend to the CDP providers' employees, who will be exposed to significant conflict of interest if the Bill is passed.
5. The Commonwealth government plays an important role in providing ongoing employment, particularly in regional areas. It is unclear whether, if the work is outsourced to CDP providers, the roles would be permanent roles, paid at the appropriate level.
6. This work is an important APS employment opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The loss of this work will transfer these employment opportunities from the APS to roles that are less secure and lower paid.
7. Finally, the Bill as it is proposed raises more questions than answers. Beyond the lack of clarity around benefit related rules, there is no information about how CDP is linked to

¹ Australian Human Rights Commission (2015) *Social Justice and Native Title Report 2015*, Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney.

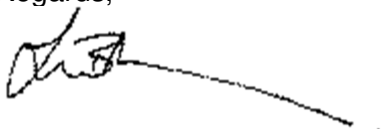
income management or what happens for those in remote communities to the service delivery model that will remain available to citizens elsewhere in Australia. While in the Explanatory Memorandum the Minister suggests that only 4 areas are declared to be remote and hence subject to the measures, in the Bill, there are 60 areas that are already trialling CDP – how are these to be treated?

8. The CPSU opposes any approach that treats the welfare of one group of citizens differently to others, and opposes the Bill.

If you require any further information please contact Dr Kristin van Barneveld, CPSU Director of Research via email Kristin.vanbarneveld@cpsu.org.au.

Yours sincerely

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lisa Newman', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lisa Newman
Deputy National President
Community and Public Sector Union