

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS SCHEME

Motion

Resumed from 1 November on the following motion moved by Hon Shelley Archer -

That this house condemns the federal government for its lack of appreciation of the detrimental impacts that will arise from the changes to the community development employment projects scheme - CDEP - on Aboriginal people and other members of the community in regional Western Australia.

HON SHELLEY ARCHER (Mining and Pastoral) [3.19 pm]: Most of the people participating in the community development employment projects scheme live in remote and regional areas where there are no alternative employment programs or options. Nothing put forward by the federal government in its current proposal will provide any sort of sustainable small market labour businesses for these communities. The federal government has provided no exit strategy to cover the removal of the CDEP scheme from these communities. The argument developed by the federal government with respect to the CDEP scheme is about welfare dependency. The CDEP scheme is really about the exchange of money for work, their labour for benefit, and in this respect the indigenous community is way ahead of the rest of Australia. The federal government has not taken into account the vital role that the CDEP scheme plays within indigenous communities in an economic and developmental sense. The changes ignore the important role the CDEP scheme will play in developing and supporting such small local businesses as can be found in Cape Leveque, Beagle Bay and Lombadina. A further issue is the loss of the very skilled CDEP scheme workers who are employed within those organisations and who play a very critical role in the successful development of these small local businesses. There has been outcry in my electorate. The federal government's changes mean that quite a lot of these small businesses will close down. They rely on the CDEP scheme; as the federal government has not provided them with any exit strategy, they will simply close down.

Key changes to the CDEP scheme were announced by the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Hon Kevin Andrews, on 29 March 2006. The media release states -

- new CDEP participants aged 20 or under will be paid a youth rate consistent with the Independent rate of Youth Allowance. This will provide an improved incentive for young Indigenous people to complete their education;
 - CDEP organisations will continue to receive full funding for each participant and will be required to use the difference between the adult and youth rate to fund training for young participants;
- Participants in CDEP in urban and regional centres will be required to register with a Job Network member;
- New CDEP participants in urban and regional centres will be limited to 52 weeks (one year) participation to ensure CDEP becomes a stepping stone to real jobs;

If there were actually any real jobs up there. The press release continues -

- selected high performing CDEP organisations will be offered options for extended funding agreements for an additional year and relevant organisations will be notified prior to the 2006-07 submission process; and
- reinforcing that full-time students in receipt of the ABSTUDY Living Allowance or other living allowances for study are not eligible to participate in CDEP.

Nothing in this document addresses the real issues for those participating in the CDEP scheme in remote and rural areas. It is once more a case of the federal government ignoring and - as I have said previously - demonising indigenous people by implying that they are dole bludgers. The proposal to remove young indigenous people from the CDEP scheme does not address the real circumstances facing young people in remote areas. Many do not have access to any appropriate education and training; there are no training facilities in remote communities. This proposal will force indigenous people into Job Network. However, it does not face the reality that there are no jobs for these people in these regions. It is absolutely abhorrent to force indigenous people from their homes in remote parts of Australia into urban centres to look for work.

On the same day as Hon Kevin Andrews' CDEP scheme announcement, Hon Dr Sharman Stone, Minister for Workforce Participation, announced changes to the rules for Newstart; this will also have an impact upon indigenous people. Dr Sharman Stone's media release states -

... Remote Area Exemptions, where some welfare recipients were exempted from looking for work or doing Work for the Dole, are being progressively removed. This is in recognition of the fact that there are often job in remote locations.

There are no jobs for indigenous people in remote locations. The jobs that are there are for teachers, nurses, police and other public servants. Unfortunately, indigenous people do not have the skills or the training to take on those jobs.

Hon Murray Criddle: What are you going to do about it?

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: I will get to that.

Hon Murray Criddle: Your mob is in government. What are you going to do about it?

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: What are we going to do about it? It is the federal -

Hon Murray Criddle: You can criticise all you like, but you must put up an alternative.

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: On the same day as the CDEP announcement - this is disguised as ensuring that indigenous Australians must have the same opportunities -

Hon Simon O'Brien: What about job creation? You are as weak as water, the lot of you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Simon O'Brien: I am sorry I interrupted the member's reading.

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: On the one hand, the CDEP scheme is effectively being phased out by placing a time limit on participation, while on the other hand, the job search rules for people who live in regional and remote communities have been tightened, and this has been implemented by the federal government.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon Vincent Catania: You should listen. You might learn something.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Is that the best you can do?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Shelley Archer has the call. She is trying to make herself heard. A number of conversations are breaking out across the chamber. If members wish to have a conversation with each other, they must leave the chamber. Hon Shelley Archer has the call.

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: Thank you, Mr Deputy President. The changes are a deadly cocktail that will do nothing to improve the lives or the employment opportunities of indigenous people in remote and rural areas of Western Australia. Most people in my electorate genuinely fear that these changes will create substantial social problems: there will be inadvertent breaking of the job network requirements; criminal activity will certainly rise due to the fact that participants will have no jobs to occupy their time; and increased demands will be made on women to compensate for reduced incomes. That is called humbugging, which means that once women get their unemployment benefit, the blokes will humbug them for their money until they hand it over. There will be punitive measures when people leave a place of employment, and we all know what they are. People will suffer a drop in self-confidence and self-esteem because they no longer have any work.

I turn to a discussion paper that was prepared by Professor John Altman, Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University. He stated that an overarching strength of the CDEP scheme, as currently constituted, is its flexibility; that it is at once an employment, training, community development and enterprise assistance program, and at times it is just an income support mechanism. That is what these communities need. Professor Altman, in a submission to the federal parliamentary Standing Committee on Indigenous Employment of May 2005, stated the following, amongst other comments -

In current public discourse on Indigenous employment there is an oversimplified representation that there are two options, employment ... and unemployment, sometimes referred to as welfare or passive welfare ...

This oversimplification ... does not accord with Indigenous livelihood options in remote and very remote Australia.

He cited the statistics when he said -

Overall, 33% of the total labour market in remote Australia is made up of CDEP participation and 75% of the labour market in very remote Australia.

It is difficult to square these statistics with press statements made by both ministers. If there are jobs in remote locations, they certainly are not available to indigenous people. CDEP schemes have provided a wide variety of work in remote and rural areas. Although a valid criticism might be that employing authorities are using CDEP labour as a substitute for permanent employment opportunities, CDEP schemes, in remote communities in particular, do provide a valuable means of funding activities such as rubbish collection, building maintenance and other unfunded community development schemes. Funding for essential services such as power, water and sewerage used to be provided for separately from income support payments, but the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has halved its essential services budget, thus preventing communities from using those funds for general community needs. Communities have increasingly been required to pay for such services out of the CDEP scheme, and individuals receiving CDEP funds are required to pay directly for such services. In effect, this has eroded the level of CDEP funding, remembering that, at the outset, CDEP was a substitute for the dole. An insidious effect of this measure has been to tie the remote communities of the CDEP with the funding of essential services. Funding essential services from CDEP funds is mainly an issue for outstations with up to eight houses and approximately 40 people. Failure to provide adequately for these services inevitably leads to migration to large communities or regional towns, and the consequent problem of overcrowding. Anyone who has been in the remote rural and regional areas where I come from will understand that these areas experience drinking, violence, criminal and social problems when there is overcrowding. Larger communities receive some funding for essential services, but they also have economies of scale unavailable to the outstations, so it is a lot easier for them. The residents of larger communities are more likely to commute to regional centres and send their kids to schools. Unfortunately, the outstations do not have these choices available to them.

It is an oversimplification to see the indigenous employment issue as one where the classic model of employment will cure all ills. It might work for us in the city but it certainly does not work in country areas. If indigenous people are to retain their connection with the country and continue to live in their isolated and sometimes very remote communities, some income support is still needed, as it was in 1977 when it was first introduced. Those same communities are being stigmatised for receiving welfare payments, even though it is a work-for-the-dole payment. They are being stigmatised for not getting proper jobs. This is disguised by the federal government as giving them the same opportunities as the rest of the Australian community. Somewhere along the line a successful program of active welfare, which has delivered many Aboriginal people into the mainstream work force, has been besieged by notions of mutual obligation by the federal government. However, these were already in place when the CDEP scheme was introduced in early 1977 and has developed over the years. It should be remembered that many, if not most, indigenous people, particularly from the more remote areas of the state, are not well enough educated to attempt any form of employment. That issue is now being actively addressed through a number of programs, including the no school, no pool program. However, that does not address the issue for those in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s, who do not go to school. They have not had any education and there is no training available. CDEP employers are often doing these sorts of jobs already. The reason that they are doing them under the CDEP scheme is that the real jobs did not exist in the first place. There will be no real jobs for these indigenous people unless we put in place a joint program of education and training run by state, local and federal governments.

Participants in the CDEP scheme in remote areas will not be subject to the time limit; however, they will be assessed by Centrelink and required to sign a participation plan which sets out their plan to move into non-CDEP employment. This is even sillier than enforcing the 12-month limit on urban, regional and city participants because, simply, if they submit a participation plan to go off the CDEP scheme and into an employment program, there will not be any employment available to them; there will be no jobs. I am not sure what are the conditions of the participation plans; however, they will include a training component. That is great, but no-one will go to remote communities to train indigenous people in the skills that they need to obtain jobs. No thought has been given to training or the employability of those in their late 50s. These people do not have skills. They will not want to entertain the idea of sitting down for 12 months to undergo a training program. What strategy will be put in place for these people when they are removed from the CDEP scheme?

Recent research by the Australian Industry Group in conjunction with Monash University as reported in *The Weekend Australian* on 23 and 24 September indicates that while 86 per cent of occupations are listed as requiring a post-secondary qualification, only about 50 per cent of Australians have this level of qualification. In effect, this means that only 14 per cent of jobs not requiring post-secondary qualifications are available to the 50 per cent of Australians who do not have such qualifications. Most of those who do not have these qualifications are indigenous people. The indigenous people are even further under-represented in their training and education skills. Indigenous people overwhelmingly fit into this category and that is why it is important that the CDEP scheme continue.

The 12-month limit will not work for these communities. They need at least four years to build up their skills so that they can take on the very small jobs in their communities. Much has been made by the policymakers about

the success of indigenous communities, such as Old Mapoon in Queensland, as examples of how Aboriginal employment and business development can work. It worked very well in Mapoon. Unfortunately, the Mapoon community was not successful in its application to take on responsibility for the network centre in that town and the successful application was from an outside community. The CDEP scheme in Mapoon, which was previously run by indigenous people, has not been given the opportunity to continue its work.

Currently, the CDEP scheme facilitates forms of gainful employment that lie between unemployment and the receipt of Newstart or other welfare benefits and conventional mainstream employment. This will cease in urban and regional areas with the imposition of the 12-month limit on CDEP participation. It will take only two to three years for all the labour force in the regional communities to go through the CDEP scheme. After that, those who remain unemployed or underemployed will be supported by Newstart or other welfare benefits. The implication is that it will be a reversal to the sit-down money. An enormous number of indigenous people will be without any skills; therefore, they will not be able to be gainfully employed and they will sit down.

The federal government said it will change the rules that apply to the CDEP scheme because it does not want indigenous people to have sit-down money. However, with these changes, including the proposed exit strategy, it will be sit-down money. It may take three or four years but the situation will be that they will sit down, not work, have no skills and no training and this will have a huge social impact on people who live in remote areas.

I have not received the information I requested from the Broome Indigenous Coordination Centre on statistics that may indicate that the program is actually working. I received a response from Kevin Andrews, the federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. When I phoned the Broome Indigenous Coordination Centre, the person I spoke to said that the ICC did have those statistics but the person was unable to provide them to me without the authority of the minister. The person at the ICC got back to me and said that the minister had not given his permission to provide the statistics. I then wrote a letter to the minister formally requesting the statistics. In his response the minister indicated that he was not prepared to release them to me. I must, therefore, ask: why will he not supply those statistics to me; what is the federal government hiding from the state and from these indigenous communities? In all its press releases the federal government has been claiming that it is a great program and is working really well; however, it is not prepared to provide any statistics to anyone to support that claim. The indications we have in the community are that the CDEP scheme providers did not meet the department's targets last year and, notwithstanding that, their targets have been increased this year. I am not quite sure how the federal government is organising this program. The CDEP providers have not met the standard, yet in the second year in which applicants have applied for CDEP funding, standards have been increased. That is without doubt a recipe for failure.

The success of CDEP schemes has been particularly evident in places that have provided longer-term training, especially in Broome, the town I live in. However, the certified training that is currently running under the CDEP programs takes longer than 12 months. It means that young indigenous people will have 12 months to achieve some form of training and, after that 12 months, are unsure of what will happen to them, especially if the training program they are undertaking is two, three or four years long. Before they undergo the 12 months' training, many of the indigenous people need to learn to read and write. Therefore, we must take into account that a literacy and numeracy program should be undertaken. Not-for-profit enterprises such as Goolarri Media, which runs local Aboriginal community, television and radio stations and provides media training, and the Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation, which is an indigenous employment and training organisation in Broome, will have some difficulty surviving unless they can use CDEP funding to employ some of their staff. Goolarri Media is a great organisation in Broome. I took a number of ministers there on Monday, and they were very impressed with the work it does, especially for young people.

Hon Vincent Catania: And the Premier.

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: Yes. Another great organisation funded partially by the CDEP scheme is the Broome drop-in centre. The centre employs the only indigenous youth workers in Broome, and it has reported to me that it has lost \$56 000 and can no longer afford to top up salaries. Without being able to top up salaries the centre will lose full-time equivalents and, consequently, services to the community and youth services will be reduced. These are consequences that the federal government has not taken into account.

Further proposed changes were announced only last week by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations under a discussion paper released in November 2006, headed "Indigenous Potential Meets Economic Opportunity". Goolarri Media has contacted me and said that, although it is a discussion paper at this stage, it is concerned that further changes will have a huge impact on Goolarri Media and it is unsure how it will keep its doors open. This discussion paper defies assurances by the federal government that it was not seeking to repeat history by simply cutting indigenous services under the guise of mainstreaming.

Everyone recognises the disadvantages faced by indigenous Australians living both in rural and urban areas, particularly when it comes to economic participation. The services to be cut recognise that and attempt to

address the many causes that contribute to these problems. We acknowledge that the CDEP scheme can be improved; we do not have a problem with that. However, simply taking away those services will deny vital social support for some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in Australia, especially those who live in remote and regional areas. Indigenous employment centres are also on the chopping board. The discussion paper recommends their removal to enable the CDEP scheme to tap into Job Network and incentive payment schemes while still supporting culturally appropriate services. All these services will be removed if every recommendation in this discussion paper is agreed to. These cuts to services will come despite growing rates of unemployment among indigenous peoples, especially in urban and regional areas. This is despite claims from the Howard government that it is committed to maintaining funding for indigenous-specific programs. Again, indigenous services will be abolished. The federal government said that it would go slowly in changing the CDEP scheme. However, five months down the track there is another discussion paper about further changes to the CDEP arrangements. Another organisation in Broome, the Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation, is in a similar position. It is looking at not how or if it will close, but when it will close. These enterprises and a number of others like these in indigenous communities are and have been for a number of years the core of Aboriginal employment and training programs. These organisations have been taking on a significant community responsibility. Their whole existence is about the betterment of their own indigenous people, and they try to improve the lives of indigenous people. The reality is that the reduction in CDEP funding has not been replaced by any other form of funding; therefore, as a result, services will be drastically curtailed. There is no reason to suppose that the picture is different in any other part of regional Western Australia, particularly in the more remote areas - or any other part of the commonwealth for that matter.

Also, in conjunction with changes to the CDEP scheme, Newstart requirements have been made more stringent. This will make it even harder for Aboriginal people to meet job search requirements when they are looking for jobs that do not exist. I am not quite sure how Aboriginal people who live in remote communities where all the jobs are already filled will meet the requirement to apply for so many jobs a week when there is simply none. In Western Australia some remote area exemptions, which exempt a number of remote communities from Newstart, have already been lifted from Bidyadanga; Halls Creek; Jigalong; the Kullari regional CDEP zones, which include Lombadina, Djarindjin, One Arm Point and Beagle Bay; and Roebourne and Hedland in the Pilbara. This apparently, in the words of Dr Stone's 29 March media release, is in recognition of the fact that there are often jobs in remote locations. Obviously Dr Sharman Stone has never been to a remote community and has never sat down with members of these communities. Obviously she has never asked them how many jobs they have and then compared the people who live in these communities and the jobs that are available.

I believe that a two-tiered system of the CDEP scheme and Newstart benefits has been introduced. In urban and regional areas, CDEP participants are required to register with Job Network, and new entrants can participate in a CDEP scheme for only 12 months but do not have to sign participant plans. Those in remote areas are required to register with Job Network schemes and do not have a time limit, but are required to sign participant plans. On the other hand, all Newstart recipients, including those in remote areas, are required to register with Centrelink. Once the remote area exemptions are all removed - they will be removed - individuals may voluntarily join the CDEP scheme or have CDEPs in their activity agreement with Centrelink, in which case they will be assessed by Centrelink anyway and required to sign CDEP participant plans. I am not quite sure how all this will work, and nobody in the federal government or in the communities can explain to me the dynamics, and what these dynamics will produce, between Centrelink, the Job Network system and the CDEP scheme.

However, with some of these changes there will be initial migration from regional centres to the communities. Therefore, people will remove themselves from Broome and go to those smaller, remote communities in the peninsula, from Bidyadanga up to Lombadina and out to Mowanjum and similar places. That is because the requirement for CDEP participants will be more stringent in Broome, and it will be easier for those people to gain training etc in the smaller, remote communities than it will be in Broome.

The fear that this will occur has already been expressed to me by the chief executive officer of one of the remote communities near Halls Creek. These matters will place increased strains on already inadequate remote community infrastructure. Again, anyone who has been to any of these remote communities will understand what I am talking about regarding overcrowding of housing and the resultant social impact on those communities because of that overcrowding. In the longer term, the predicted overcrowding and other practical difficulties in meeting the requirements for the Newstart participant plans is likely to produce migration into regional centres. Therefore, because of the overcrowding in some of those remote communities and the social ills that arise as a consequence, some of the people who already live in those communities will remove themselves and go to regional centres, which will again put an inappropriate burden on the infrastructure and services in those centres.

I will not attempt to deal with the myriad social problems caused by overcrowding, but suffice it to say that, in addition to the problems inflicted upon indigenous people, the wider community is also adversely affected by the issues of noise, drunkenness and petty crime, including trespass; theft; assault; as I said, humbugging; littering

and so on. These are some of the issues which have already come to the fore in the towns of Derby and Broome and which have been brought to my attention by those shires. Additional strain will also be placed on infrastructure and community services such as housing, schools, health services, welfare services, police, jails and local government facilities, to name just a few. No thought has been given by the federal government to these effects. There is no exit strategy for these indigenous people when they are removed from the CDEP scheme and put on unemployment or underemployment benefits.

Both the latest and earlier CDEP changes have effectively reduced the funding available for infrastructure and services, and there has been no replacement or top up for these communities to compensate them for the changes that have been made. The inevitable consequence will therefore be that an increased burden will be placed on both state and local governments as the effects of the CDEP and Newstart changes are felt. We are starting to feel those in Broome and Derby. In addition, CDEP funds spent in regional economies have a significant effect. The research I did showed that the figure for the Kimberley was about \$45 million last year; in Broome alone the figure was \$30 million. Not all these funds will be lost in the short term, but the loss will certainly be felt in the long term. It may well be argued that placement of Aboriginal people in permanent jobs will more than make up for the economic loss to the community from a reduction in CDEP funding, but that is true only to the extent that jobs are available in those communities. I do not know how often I have to say that there are no jobs in those communities. With the 12-month limit on the new CDEP starters, these centres will eventually run out of eligible applicants. Job readiness of CDEP participants is a significant factor, and the practice in regional centres has tended to be to accept starters in jobs back into the CDEP scheme if the job did not work out. This will no longer happen. If a person goes to a job through the CDEP scheme and it does not work out and the person leaves the job, he or she will not be able to go back into the scheme; he or she will go straight on to unemployment benefits. Moving people off the CDEP scheme or Newstart into permanent jobs is a fantastic objective that I agree with, but there is an obvious downside to the new arrangements. As the federal government was repeatedly told during its pitifully inadequate consultation process in 2005, in most regional and remote areas very few suitable jobs are available to indigenous people. This will result in an exacerbation of the spiral of unemployment, unemployability, poverty, hopelessness and all the other things that lead to the ills and problems we already see in many of our Aboriginal communities.

Since all this is glaringly obvious, it is difficult to escape one of the two obvious conclusions about why the federal government introduced the changes to the CDEP scheme. The first conclusion is that the federal government has been breathtakingly insensitive and stupid in developing a set of changes to the CDEP scheme and Newstart that will worsen the lot of indigenous people by forcing them away from the previous arrangements and making them more welfare dependent; that is, going back to the bad old days of sit-down money. That is exactly what will happen here. They will be taken off the CDEP scheme when there are no jobs, and they will get unemployment benefits and sit down and do absolutely nothing. Currently, if they are on the CDEP scheme, they do a number of hours of work during the week; however, that is not a requirement of unemployment benefits. The second way I can look at it is that the changes in the CDEP scheme are a deliberate attempt to bring the scheme to an end and force all unemployed and underemployed Aboriginal people into the mainstream Centrelink Job Network arrangements, and force the closure of Aboriginal communities on the basis that they are uneconomic. This is one way the federal government can do away with its financial obligations to indigenous people. The former scenario is just bad policy on the part of the federal government; the latter is paternalism gone mad, and ignores what Aboriginal leaders have been saying for quite a number of years about the connection with country. Both scenarios smack very much of ethnic cleansing; whether intentional or otherwise I do not know, but that is what it says to me.

A parallel view that some might hold - I am being a bit more generous to the federal government in expressing this view - is that the government is continuing the process of transferring funding obligations to the states, as well as moving the population away from the remote communities to the regional centres where service delivery is cheaper.

Hon Kim Chance: And cost shifting to local government as well.

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: Yes.

Hon Kim Chance: It is a disgraceful thing to do.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Forty kids running around with chlamydia and all sorts of things.

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: Hon Robyn McSweeney does not seem to be too concerned about that considering that the changes to the CDEP scheme will enhance that situation, thank you very much.

There is a key issue in all this, which policy makers seem to have missed entirely. Aboriginal people are entitled to the same basic rights as every other citizen in Australia. Those basic rights are being removed by the CDEP and by the federal government. More than lip service needs to be paid by the federal government to the creation of local indigenous industries, including tourism. In addressing indigenous policy issues, a clear distinction

needs to be made between the provision of employment programs and income support, and the wider question of the living rights of indigenous people and their entitlement to the same services and facilities as all other Australian citizens.

Nobody would deny that the ideal situation would see more indigenous people in real jobs and better able to manage financially. The reality is that over 70 per cent of CDEP participants are in remote and very remote regions. They live in areas where the job market is very limited or, in some areas, non-existent. Firstly, the CDEP scheme currently provides higher income for these people. For them it is better than being unemployed and earning sit-down money. Secondly, a significant number of participants work more than the regulation hours that are required under those CDEP arrangements and the previous CDEP arrangements. The CDEP scheme generated nearly 3 800 full-time jobs in very remote regions compared with only 1 500 places generated by indigenous employment centres, which were created by the federal government over two years. Thus, in very remote areas the CDEP outperforms the federal government's IECs in getting people into full-time jobs.

Some of the more recent statements from the federal government's side can only open a way for more concern: homelands being referred to as cultural museums, and the idea of indigenous culture being removed from school curricula. It looks almost as though, by whatever means are available, the federal government is going back to the bad old days of the assimilation policy. With indigenous people having no elected voice to defend themselves against such lines of thought, indigenous people are certainly feeling very uneasy, as we all should, under the present federal government and the present changes made under the CDEP scheme.

HON VINCENT CATANIA (Mining and Pastoral) [4.03 pm]: I agree with the comments made by Hon Shelley Archer: the Howard government's move to abolish indigenous-specific employment services in urban areas is a backward step for this country. As Hon Shelley Archer mentioned, this defies the assurances by the Howard government that it was not seeking to repeat history by simply cutting indigenous services under the guise of mainstreaming. I believe that the federal government is trying to move towards a one-size-fits-all option for indigenous employment, which is a backward step. As we all know, Aboriginal affairs is a constitutional responsibility of the federal government. This is another step by the Howard government in moving that responsibility onto the states. As Hon Shelley Archer clearly outlined, the results of getting rid of those CDEP services, and the effect it has particularly on Western Australia, is quite concerning. The CDEP scheme provides a service to remote communities where employment is quite scarce. It provides an avenue for communities to exist and to thrive by providing services that those remote communities cannot otherwise obtain. It is moving people out of remote communities and onto the fringes of regional towns in Western Australia, particularly those that Hon Shelley Archer and I represent. I think that is what the federal government is trying to do. It believes these communities should exist, but this is another way in which the commonwealth is shirking its responsibilities and imposing them on the states. It is a matter of some concern. It is a constitutional responsibility of the federal government but it is passing that responsibility to the states. It is quite amazing that yesterday we saw the historic decision of the High Court determining that the commonwealth could regulate workplace relations by using the corporations power of the Constitution to take away the states' rights to look after industrial relations. On one hand the commonwealth is pushing its responsibilities onto the states and on the other hand it is taking the states' rights away when it suits the commonwealth to do so. This is typical of the Howard government. These moves have an enormous effect on Western Australia. Obviously, the other states are experiencing the same sort of thing but probably not to the extent that we are.

Hon Kim Chance: How is this affecting regional towns like Broome?

Hon VINCENT CATANIA: I was in Broome on the weekend and I listened to what the shire and residents had to say. The people who are moving off the CDEP scheme are finding it hard to get employment in the remote towns and are coming into towns such as Broome. It is creating an atmosphere of hopelessness because the federal government has not put in place any programs to look after the people who are coming into regional towns. They have no shelter and no employment prospects. The lack of programs is causing problems with housing, for example. Some of the people who are coming from remote communities are finding it difficult to find places to sleep. They often cause overcrowding because they stay with relatives, or they use facilities such as the local park or under a tree. That can cause problems for places such as Broome where tourism is an important factor for the economy. This cost shifting by the commonwealth to the states is causing social problems as a result of people leaving the remote communities. It is having a huge impact -

Hon Helen Morton: What is having a huge impact? This program does not start until January next year.

Hon Shelley Archer: It has already started.

Hon Helen Morton: It has not. It is a discussion paper.

Hon Shelley Archer: No, it is not. It is already in place.

Hon VINCENT CATANIA: It is typical of the federal government to take control of matters when it suits it to do so and to foist on the states those matters that do not. Where will the federal government stop in its drive to take away the powers of the states? I will read to the house the concerns that Justice Kirby raised in yesterday's High Court decision. In his conclusion regarding the High Court's determination that the commonwealth's industrial relations reforms are valid, Justice Kirby said -

The imperative to ensure a "fair go all round", which lay at the heart of federal industrial law ... is destroyed in a single stroke.

Hon Norman Moore: Do you remember the High Court case in the Tasmanian dams case? If you want to talk about who is doing the right thing by virtue of the Constitution, you must look at both sides, Mr Catania.

Hon VINCENT CATANIA: The motion is looking at a very important issue. The amount of interest generated in the daylight saving bill is amazing. That issue is neither here nor there, and yet important issues such as the community development employment program and how it affects regional Western Australia -

Hon Helen Morton: Which government brought the daylight saving bill to the top of the list?

Hon VINCENT CATANIA: We must deal with all bills.

Hon Norman Moore: You were just saying that it was unimportant. Put it to the bottom of the list and we will be happy.

Hon Helen Morton: Speak to your leader about why it was brought to number one.

Hon VINCENT CATANIA: If members listen to what I am saying, they will understand that the level of interest among the public and members opposite on the issue of daylight saving is amazing. Most members have had a chance to speak on it, and those who have not will do so after the debate on this motion. It is amazing how much interest the issue of daylight saving has generated. If members want to compare daylight saving with health, education and community safety, I suggest that daylight saving is on the bottom of the list of what is important to society.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Hon VINCENT CATANIA: The issue of the CDEP scheme is very important because it has a great effect on Western Australia and it should be brought to the attention of all Western Australians. I hope that they can generate a similar amount of interest on this issue as has been generated on the issue of daylight saving, and that they will lobby the federal government to change the decision it made about the CDEP scheme. I am concerned about the issues that the federal government is picking and choosing to keep and the issues it wants to pass on to the states. I urge opposition members to lobby their federal counterparts to make these changes for the better and to stick up for the state rather than be part of those members of the federal government who want only to take what benefits them and to shirk the federal government's Constitutional responsibility to look after Aboriginal affairs.

Hon Simon O'Brien asked what the state was doing. I highlight a report called "Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage", which was released in 2005. It is the first report of its kind in Western Australia. It provides a compendium of concise indicators highlighting the relatively disadvantaged position held by indigenous people in Western Australia. It extends on the analysis provided in the national "Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage" report by expanding on Western Australia's specific time-series analysis, because a more detailed analysis of geographic, gender and age characteristics was available. Some of the results from the report show that in 2001, indigenous and non-indigenous people had similar rates of participation in post-secondary education, although indigenous people were more likely to undertake post-secondary study at a TAFE institution than were non-indigenous people. Fewer than one in 10 indigenous persons - just 9.4 per cent - aged 15 years and over obtained a post-school qualification. That is lower than the rate of non-indigenous people, which is 32 per cent, and of all indigenous Australians, which is 12 per cent. Remoteness has an impact on a number of people completing post-secondary qualifications. A relatively low proportion of indigenous populations are engaged in employment compared with non-indigenous persons. The results of relatively low labour force participation rates, coupled with the rate of unemployment, show that in 2001 the labour force participation rates of indigenous persons were two to three times higher than that of non-indigenous persons. Further, CDEP employment accounts for more than 30 per cent of indigenous employment. This proportion is higher in remote areas and is 69 per cent.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended from 4.15 to 4.30 pm