



Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
The Australian National University

Education, Training and Indigenous Futures
CAEPR Policy Research: 1990-2007

Research Summaries

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Reference No. 5

Summarising: Altman, Gray & Levitus (2005), *Policy issues for the Community Development Employment Projects Scheme in Rural and Remote Australia*

Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990-2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

The MCEETYA report and associated research summaries are available at <www.anu.edu.au/caepr/education.php>.

Title of Research:

Policy issues for the Community Development Employment Projects Scheme in Rural and Remote Australia

Research Publication:

CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 271/2005

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2005_DP271.pdf>

Name of Researcher(s):

J.C. Altman, M.C. Gray and R. Levitus

Time period:

The report draws upon the most up-to-date information available at the time of preparation, which was generally 2001 and 2002 information.

Geographic location:

National, with analyses according to remoteness.

Methodology:

This study analyses data from the 2001 ABS Population and Housing Census and the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

Aims:

The aim of this study is to review the social and economic impacts of the CDEP scheme and canvass options for future policy directions in regard to Indigenous economic development and the role of the CDEP scheme.

Selected findings and insights

The study found that in 2002 **participation in CDEP** varied according to remoteness, with 3.7% of the working age Indigenous population in major cities being employed in the CDEP scheme, and rising to 16.2% and 42.2% in remote and very remote regions, respectively.

- If CDEP was not counted towards 'employment' then **unemployment rates would rise** markedly, especially in remote and very remote Australia – for remote regions from 17% to 46% and for very remote regions from 7% to 76%. Australia-wide the increase would be from 23% to 43% with a projection through to 2011 of 50%.

CDEP provided a major avenue for skills training, with almost all activities undertaken through the scheme providing some on-the-job training and experience. CDEP organisations in turn provided both accredited formal training leading to a qualification as well as informal training.

The paper provides an analysis of **VET participation** in 2002 in terms of labour force status and remoteness. Overall, 27% of Indigenous persons aged 15–64 years had participated in vocational education and training in the 12 months prior to the 2002 survey.

- Almost a third of those living in major cities, as well as those in regional and, to a slightly lesser extent, remote areas, had participated in VET. This compared to 16% of those living in very remote areas having participated in VET in the previous 12 months.

- Some 50% of those in mainstream employment had participated in VET in the previous 12 months compared to 28% of those working in the CDEP scheme, slightly more than those unemployed but seeking work.
- In the major cities, just over half of those working in the CDEP scheme had participated in VET (55%) and more than those working in mainstream jobs (47%). For other regions there was greater participation among those employed in the mainstream.
- Apart from the major cities, those living in other localities and working in CDEP have greater VET participation rates than those unemployed.

The paper notes that especially in the case of urban CDEP projects, CDEP has provided a pathway to mainstream employment. The paper also identifies substantial social and cultural benefits for those participating in the CDEP – greater involvement in traditional customary activities such as hunting and gathering.

Educational implications:

The outstanding feature of this paper is that it identifies the challenge facing the Australian labour market if Indigenous employment is defined solely in terms of mainstream employment (that is, excluding CDEP). Not only does this mean that jobs need to be generated – it also means that those jobs need to be filled, and filled by Indigenous workers. If one of the major determinants of competing successfully for a job is level of educational attainment and relevant skills and knowledge then 'skilling' up the Indigenous labour force, in turn, poses a major challenge for educational authorities. **[policy]**

The paper also suggests the need for greater access to training in very remote areas, or where there is such access, greater linkages between training offered and the uses to which it could be put so that participation rates increase. New employment opportunities are emerging in the areas of wildlife management, land and sea management to complement existing arts and craft industries and tourism industries. The success of these new industries, which combine elements of the market economy and the traditional or customary economy, will be in part dependent upon the responsiveness by education and training providers to their training needs. Related to this, is the need for training to deliver skills which are also relevant to general community life in order to maintain their sense of well-being. That is, training provides important community benefits as well as economic benefits centred upon the individual. **[training]**

With changes to the CDEP scheme, the role of CDEP in assisting community development will be reduced. Schools and other education providers are best placed to take over this type of responsibility in partnership with Indigenous organisations through the development of community learning centres. Other CAEPR research explores this learning centre idea further. **[partnerships]**

Another issue to be considered by education and training providers is the role that the CDEP scheme played in 'directing' participants into training programs. This link has been quite an effective pathway to training and is largely lost in much of Australia under the CDEP policy changes. **[pathways]**

Relevance:

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

The challenge for pathways to training, employment and higher education

Related papers:

B.H. Hunter, Y. Kinfu and J. Taylor, 'The future of Indigenous work: Forecasts of labour force status to 2011', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 251*, 2003.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2003_DP251.pdf>.