



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. 34

Summarising: Champion (2002), *Urban CDEPs as Indigenous Employment Centres: Policy and community implications*

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:

Urban CDEPs as Indigenous Employment Centres: Policy and community implications

Research Publication:

CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 228/2002

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2002_DP228.pdf>

Name of Researcher(s):

M. Champion

Time period:

August 2001

Geographic location:

Redfern, Sydney

Methodology:

Data for this study was collected on a brief visit to the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation (RAC). Views and commentary on the trial of the Indigenous Employment Centre (IEC) initiative were sought from participants, managers and also relevant DEWR and ATSIC staff. Data from the 1991 and 1996 Censuses were also utilised.

Aims:

The paper explores the policy background and implementation of welfare reform initiatives such as the Indigenous Employment Policy scheme, with particular concern for how such reforms may increase pathways to employment out of CDEP schemes.

- This paper aimed to describe the implementation of the Redfern CDEP Work Preparation and Employment Trial; whereby the CDEP scheme provided volunteer participants with work preparation training and assistance into employment, including pre-placement and post-placement support to employees and employers.
- The paper also aims to illustrate some factors which may limit the effectiveness of such reform.

Selected findings and insights:

The inter-organisational position of the IEC trials, situated as they were between CDEP schemes, DEWR, ATSIC, Centrelink, private employers and the Indigenous community members, was likely to result in competing expectations and difficulties. This study found that:

- The development of **more coherent relationships and expectations** between organisations involved in coordinating pathways to employment was necessary;
- **Racism** in the workplace at certain job-placements undermined the confidence of people seeking to move out of the 'Indigenous enclave' that supported their CDEP employment;
- **'Training fatigue'**. There were concerns that participants involved in pre-vocational and Job Search Training were actually being discouraged, and leaving the program, by the amount of training they had to undergo - particularly with no guarantee of employment opportunities at the end of it; and

- Indigenous organisations may have had difficulties in managing both CDEP projects and mainstream employment projects due to the different assumptions on which each are based.

Educational implications:

It seems that training for the sake of training can potentially have very negative impacts on Indigenous job-seekers¹. If continuous and extensive training does not result in employment opportunities in the private sector or mainstream public sector, people can become disillusioned. People running pre-vocational training and more general training programs in the education sector should therefore be sensitive to their role in raising expectations of employment.

- Could also note the need for better coordination between organisations and community partnerships in managing these expectations. **[training]**

Racism presents a particular challenge to education and training providers to ensure that work preparation type courses include strategies for Indigenous job seekers and those leaving school to be able to deal with racism in the workplace. This also suggests the need for continuing support during the early stages of employment as well as the need to include issues of racism within the broader school curriculum.

[curriculum] [support services]

Relevance:

Domain 2: School and Community Educational Partnerships

Cross-cultural understanding of purposes and value of education

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Participation, retention and achievement in post-compulsory schooling, training and higher education

Related papers:

D.E. Smith, 'CDEP as urban enterprise: the case of Yarnteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation, Newcastle', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 114*, 1996.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1996_DP114.pdf>

D.E. Smith, 'Redfern Works: the policy and community challenges of an urban CDEP scheme', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 99*, 1995.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1995_DP99.pdf>

D.E. Smith, 'Working for CDEP: A case study of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme in Port Lincoln, South Australia', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 75*, 1994.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1994_DP75.pdf>

1. Whilst the same point can be made in respect of non-Indigenous job seekers, this notion of 'training fatigue' is commonly expressed among Indigenous people and organisations.