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National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Publishers note

On 15 April 2004 the Commonwealth Government announced its proposal to abolish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). However, as at the time of writing this report, the Senate has not passed the bill for the abolition of this commission. It has also been decided that the ATSIC regional councils will retain an advisory role until 30 June 2005. Nevertheless, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) department has been divided up between a number of federal departments. On 1 July 2004 the branch responsible for administering the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme became part of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Additional information relating to this research is available in *The role of Community Development Employment Projects in rural and remote communities: Support document*, which can be accessed from NCVER's website <http://www.ncver.edu.au>.

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Key messages

- The Community Development Employment Projects scheme continues to reduce rates of unemployment for Indigenous Australians in the bush. Nevertheless, the movement of participants into unsubsidised employment in areas with thin labour markets remains difficult.
- The Community Development Employment Projects scheme cannot be expected to solve the problems of unemployment or under-employment for Indigenous Australians in the bush or elsewhere. Major changes in the way we think about the types of economic development possible in rural and remote areas are essential. However, this scheme can assist by providing funds to support employers to provide training and employment for participants, and paid part-time work for those between jobs.
- This study confirms that the flexibility of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme enables rural and remote communities to access substantial blocks of funds and resources to customise activities and enterprises and thus improve the physical and social environments of local communities. The scheme provides opportunities for individuals to experience regular work and undertake training. This engagement enables participants to act as positive role models for children and others where participation in employment and training is not always the norm.
- Indigenous leaders want their communities to develop the professional and trade skills required by all communities, and they agree that the level of initial and advanced education needs to be raised. Conclusions about the extent to which this scheme is able to meet these needs are not straightforward. The scheme cannot be blamed for the poor initial education of Indigenous Australians, nor can it be expected to provide the academic preparation in specific subjects required for entrance into professional courses. However, it can improve access to education and training for participants by coordinating training provision and providing encouragement and financial support for training delivery and participation. There is also room for the scheme to develop closer training linkages with external funding agencies and programs.
- The success of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme in encouraging participants and communities to engage in education and training will also be heavily dependent on the availability of qualified tradespersons and accredited trainers and assessors to deliver, supervise and assess training. It will also be dependent on the availability of training programs and accommodation for training supervisors or staff. The scheme will have to develop appropriate strategies to attract suitably qualified personnel to the bush to provide these services.
- Indigenous leaders in rural and remote communities want the scheme to continue. However, there is a need to ensure that all participants are engaged in relevant and productive activities. Programs should be made available to help scheme managers and community leaders to identify and increase the range of possible productive employment and community development activities, entrepreneurial ventures and relevant training. There is also room for enhancing the business development and governance skills of those who are responsible for the management of these schemes.

Executive summary

Aims

This study aims to describe the role of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme in rural and remote communities in Australia and to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme. It describes the major needs of such communities (as identified by elected representatives), and how the schemes have attempted to meet these needs.

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme—an alternative to welfare payments

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme has evolved as a way of providing Indigenous Australians with 'alternatives to welfare benefits' and as a means for community development. It has subsequently focused on providing work for Indigenous people in areas where they had little prospect of employment, and this has included both rural and urban locations. In 2002, discussions commenced on the possibility of creating two main streams of activity under the scheme—one focused on sustainable community development, the other on training for employment. Policy confirming this direction was ratified in 2004. The establishment of these two streams of activity recognises that the creation of sustainable employment opportunities is difficult.

Community needs

In identifying what they saw as the needs for their communities, regional councillors generally agreed on the industry and professional skills required by any community—mainstream or Indigenous. These included skills and knowledge to allow individuals to participate in political, professional (including health, education, law), policing, community services, business, administration and trade occupations. Indigenous people required political and governance skills for participation in the boards of Indigenous organisations. They also needed to develop the negotiation and decision-making skills to allow them to participate in mainstream local, state and Indigenous politics, and management skills to manage Indigenous agencies and commercial ventures. They required marketing skills to enable them to promote their unique culture and heritage. Above all, they wanted Indigenous young people to be able to compete in schools, society and in the job market without experiencing discrimination.

Community Development Employment Projects scheme activities

The scheme supports many different activities: community-oriented activities, commercial ventures, and employment with community and external host employers. Scheme funds can be tailored to individuals and the needs of specific communities.

Participants in the Community Development Employment Projects scheme voluntarily forego their rights to income benefits upon joining the scheme. They may be involved in working with children and young people in childcare and after-school-care centres. They may work in health, and in drug and alcohol centres, and in safety houses or women's shelters. They may help to provide a better lifestyle for senior citizens, and work as school bus drivers, and carpenters and construction workers in Indigenous housing agencies. They may construct and repair bough shelters, and help community members to avoid trouble with the police in night patrol duties. Members of the scheme may also work in municipal activities, such as dust suppression and constructing and maintaining public roads, highways, public gardens, and air strips. They may also work in agencies performing specialist services for the Indigenous community as a whole (for example, the preservation of Indigenous languages and culture, and the provision of interpreter services).

Those who are hired by host employers work as receptionists, clerks, janitors, cleaners, shop assistants, trainee construction workers and carpenters, teacher aides, meatworks labourers, health workers, carers, recreation officers, and youth group leaders.

Participants also work in commercial ventures established by the scheme itself. Business ventures have included: cattle, sheep, and emu farms, studs, service stations, rubbish tip and recycling management services, vineyards, museums, arts and crafts enterprises, automotive and garment-making and embroidery workshops, retail dress and grocery shops, vegetable gardens, poultry pens, nurseries, sawmills, furniture-making, art and craft shops, meatworks and labour hire companies.

Participants

As at August 2003, there were 35 089 participants in Community Development Employment Projects schemes nationwide. Of these participants, 92.7% were Indigenous, with 7.3% from the non-Indigenous population who were accepted as participants. Over 90% were from the aboriginal ethnic group with small percentages from the Torres Strait Islander ethnic group, or combined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ethnic groups. The majority of all participants, almost two-thirds (60.7%) were male.

Almost two-thirds of Community Development Employment Projects scheme participants were in the 25–64 years age group, with just under a third in the 18–25 years age group, and just over 6% in the 15–17 year age group. There was a small number aged 65 years or older. However, in terms of participation rates, the scheme seems to be most important for the 18–25 years age group.

Training participation

Although the Community Development Employment Projects scheme's main mandate is to provide employment for participants, one of the performance targets for the scheme is to have 75% of work activities provide training for participants. The findings of this study indicate that almost all activities undertaken through the scheme provided on-the-job training and experience for participants. However, the uptake of off-the-job formal training by participants was less frequent. On-the-job experience helped participants to develop skills and knowledge required for the performance of their duties, including occupation-related skills, interpersonal skills, and

acceptable work habits. A 'no work no pay' rule adopted by all schemes in the study generally provided reinforcement for the learning of acceptable work habits and contributed to increased self-discipline. Those involved in leadership positions (foremen, supervisors etc.) also developed or enhanced their management and leadership skills.

Apart from developing skills through on-the-job training and experience, participants also undertook formal training. In the main, managers reported that most of those involved in formal training were engaged in short courses (one- or two-day programs). These courses aimed to help participants to obtain skills and knowledge (and licences and certificates where required) for the operation of heavy machinery and equipment, in the application of workplace safety, and in computer technology. Participants were also involved in a variety of apprenticeships or traineeships (for example, construction, carpentry, horticulture, automotive mechanics, retail and panel-beating, jackeroo, child care, viticulture, business administration, automotive retail and hospitality). They also undertook programs to prepare them for other occupations, including sport and recreation coaching, interpreting, land management, and education and training. Participants were also involved in literacy and numeracy courses.

Participants tended to complete short courses, with the completion of longer courses being less frequent. Barriers to completing longer courses (for example, courses associated with traineeships or higher certificate levels) included poor literacy and numeracy skills, inadequate support from registered training organisations, and insensitive approaches to training. Obligations to attend tribal ceremonies and sorry camps (where relatives and friends of a deceased person gather to mourn in extended traditional funeral ceremonies) were other barriers.

Conclusion

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme helps Indigenous communities in rural and remote Australia to provide employment, skills development, and various essential and desirable municipal services. It provides the funding which assists communities to decide on what activities are required to improve their physical, psychological and social environments, and to protect traditional cultures. It enables the establishment of income-generating ventures.

Although the flexibility of the scheme means that communities have access to blocks of funding which enable them to mount projects which suit local conditions, the identification of suitable projects remains a challenge. There is a need to ensure that managers and those in charge of these projects have ample opportunity to enhance their own skills and knowledge about successful strategies which have been used elsewhere. It is also important to ensure that individuals have access to training that will provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to help them to improve their own economic situation or that of their communities.

The scheme plays an important role in reducing rates of unemployment in the bush. If it were to cease, unemployment rates for Indigenous Australians would stand at about 40%, with projections for substantial increases in the near future.

The movement of participants into unsubsidised employment is difficult in rural and remote areas. Although the scheme cannot be expected to solve the problems of unemployment in the bush or elsewhere, it can help to alleviate such problems. It can assist by offering employers financial support to provide external employment for participants. It can also provide a base for seasonal workers, and other individuals who are between jobs.

Indigenous leaders are keen to have their own community members involved in critical professions like teaching to encourage positive attachment to schools among Indigenous youth. They also believe that having their own community members participate in formal education and gaining professional qualifications and employment will provide positive role-modelling for younger generations and improve the public and self-perception of Indigenous people.

Conclusions about the extent to which the Community Development Employment Projects scheme can help communities to meet these espoused needs are not clear-cut. Firstly the scheme cannot be expected to solve the problems of poor initial education, and especially the lack of fundamental literacy and numeracy skills of Indigenous Australians, nor can it be blamed for poor school retention rates. Moreover, the scheme cannot be expected to provide participants with the academic preparation in specific subjects required for entrance into professional mainstream courses, including teaching, law, social work and health professions. This requires specific and urgent attention in the primary and secondary education sectors. However, the Community Development Employment Projects scheme can help in some ways to improve access to education and training for participants by coordinating training provision, and providing the encouragement and financial support which enable them to engage in and complete formal qualifications. The scheme also has the potential to assist in improving school retention rates by providing programs which focus on the importance of school completion and the acquisition of qualifications and skills.

The origins and operations of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme

The study

This study examines the role of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme in rural and remote Indigenous communities. The study was developed in consultation with representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Community Development Employment Projects program based in Adelaide, and managers and researchers from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

Its aim was to evaluate the program by investigating the role it plays in rural and remote Australia and the extent to which it was meeting the regional needs identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission regional councillors. A secondary aim was to investigate the extent to which participants were involved in formal training and any barriers experienced in the completion of formal training.

The study was driven by the following research questions:

- What are the skill requirements and other needs that have been identified by Indigenous regional communities?
- To what extent does the Community Development Employment Projects program help to meet these needs?

Although it must be acknowledged that there are questions to be investigated regarding the ability or willingness of individuals to participate in the Community Development Employment Projects scheme and about the processes which control access to participation, this study is not designed to do this. Rather its primary focus is on the outcomes or benefits derived from involvement in the scheme by participants and communities, as identified by regional leaders, and scheme managers and management committee members.

Information on current activities and trends

Information on the skill requirements and other needs of remote communities was gathered from regional councillors from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission regions of Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, and Roma in South-East Queensland. Information on the activities, benefits and challenges of the various programs in these two regions was collected from managers and committee members of those particular programs. Community Development Employment Projects schemes in the Tennant Creek region included Ali Curung, Julalikari Buramana, Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation, Pappulu Appar Kari Language Centre, Thangenrenke (Barrow Creek) and Elliott. Those from the Roma region included Toowoomba, Bidjara (Charleville), Cherbourg, and Kamilaroi (formerly St George and Dirrabandi).

Unit record data from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services database, and information from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission annual reports were used to provide an up-to-date picture on current participation, age and gender profiles, and targets and

outcomes. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistics on Indigenous students in schools were also used to determine participation and retention rates.

Origins and objectives

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme was instigated by the Commonwealth Government in 1977 and began in a handful of remote Indigenous communities. Three years later the scheme had increased to 170 Indigenous community organisations with 17 772 participants. By 30 June 2001 there were 32 616 participants in 270 Indigenous community organisations. Funding was available for 33 188 places. For the full year there was a 94% utilisation rate. By 30 June 2003 there were 35 182 participants and 272 Community Development Employment Projects schemes nationwide. Of these, 67.4% were in remote locations. By August 2003 there was a slight increase in participant numbers and two schemes had ceased to exist. A current demographic profile of participants is included in table 1.

Table 1: Total participation by gender and ethnic group—August 2003

	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	**Number**	**%**
Aboriginal	19 196	90.1	12 336	89.5	**31 532**	**89.9**
Torres Strait Islander	327	1.5	177	1.3	**504**	**1.4**
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	289	1.4	201	1.5	**490**	**1.4**
(Indigenous—sub total)	*19 812*	*93.0*	*12 714*	*92.3*	***32 526***	***92.7***
Other	1 498	7.0	1 065	7.7	**2 563**	**7.3**
Total participants—Australia	**21 310**	**100.0**	**13 779**	**100.0**	**35 089**	**100.0**

The objectives of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme have evolved over the years. It began as a scheme to provide Indigenous communities in remote areas with 'alternatives to welfare benefits' and as a means for community development. It was subsequently extended to include other areas where Indigenous people had few prospects of employment, and included both rural and urban locations.

In 1990, the scheme was promoted in the inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission annual report (1990) as 'an alternative to entrenched unemployment … and … a means of achieving community development, enhancing the economic status of participants, and receiving on-the-job work experience'. In 1994 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission annual report (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 1994) described the scheme as aiming to 'provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in locations where there are no, or limited, alternative employment prospects'. By 2001, the formal objective for the program was 'to provide work for unemployed Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in community-managed activities which assist the individual in acquiring skills which benefit the community, develop business enterprises and/or lead to unsubsidised employment' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2001, p.155). In addition, the schemes were to continue to maintain a role in enabling participants to satisfy 'mutual obligation' responsibilities, generate income through entrepreneurial activities, and build and improve 'social cohesion' and 'community capacity' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2001, p.157). By 2003 these goals were still a feature of the program, but the specific aims had diversified (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2003).

In 2003 there was a move to improve the strategic use of Community Development Employment Projects scheme funding for combating family violence and reducing substance abuse in remote communities. This led to a new policy, 'CDEP–Working for Families'. Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Commission and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services will receive the wages component for 1000 additional places over four years.[1]

During 2002–2003 discussions commenced on the reshaping of the philosophy of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme to create two main streams—the Sustainability Community Program for remote areas; and the Training for Employment Program for non-remote, or major regional or urban areas. Geographic location, access to services, labour markets and mainstream economies, and Indigenous needs and aspirations would differentiate the two streams. These reforms were ratified in 2004 to be fully implemented in 2004–2005.

The 'training for employment' stream is based on the view that recipients of welfare should be encouraged to actively engage with the 'so-called real economy' (Altman 2001, p.89). There is also a view that these individuals should have to provide certain services (generally work participation) in return for this welfare. Nevertheless, as already noted, there continue to be major obstacles for full participation of Indigenous people in the 'real' labour market. This is because almost two-thirds live in remote and regional Australia where opportunities for the development of enterprises are minimal. It is this recognition that led to the decision to create two major program streams of activity, with one stream still focused on training for employment, and the other stream on sustainable community development.

It is also important to note, however, that although remoteness is generally the major reason for disadvantage, in some circumstances it can provide opportunities for economic rewards. For example, communities which have major mineral deposits on their lands, and communities in major tourist areas can benefit from this remoteness (Altman 2001).

In 2002–2003 an initiative aimed at helping Indigenous workers move into external unsubsidised labour markets established Indigenous employment centres in 12 Community Development Employment Projects scheme sites. These were in Queensland (Brisbane, Rockhampton) South Australia (Port Augusta), New South Wales (Wollongong, Redfern, Queanbeyan), Western Australia (Broome, Perth, Kalgoorlie), Tasmania (Hobart), Victoria (Shepparton) and the Northern Territory (Darwin). Since its inception, a total of 1330 Indigenous individuals have received assistance, with about 24% moving into the unsubsidised labour market (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2003). There were another 14 Indigenous employment centres due to start in the 2003–2004 period. Hunter (2004) reports that the Indigenous employment centres have been successful in helping Indigenous Australians to move into unsubsidised work.

Governance of Community Development Employment Projects scheme

The governance of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme is undertaken by regional councils which have been charged with setting regional policy directions, promoting efficiency in administration, and the development of inter-agency and private sector linkages to attain successful outcomes. Since 1 July 2003 the scheme has been administered by the Commonwealth Department for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services.[2] There has also been a move to 'corporatise' the various schemes within regions. This means that scheme participants and projects in a number of communities or sites are managed by a central organisation. During 2002–2003 regional Community Development Employment Projects schemes were created in the Murdi Paaki (Bourke, New South Wales), Kullarri (Broome, Western

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[1] The Working for Families initiative aims to fight family violence, provide support for families, and help to alleviate substance abuse in remote communities. This will entail establishing new night patrols and active strategies to prevent family violence. Also important will be the introduction of new police aides, court support workers and interpreters to help those who commit or are the victims of crime to deal with the legal and justice system. Strategies for eliminating substance abuse will include expanded counselling, support and treatment services. There will also be a focus on increasing diversionary education and training programs for substance abusers and young offenders. Also envisaged are new and expanded facilities for sport and recreation, and expanded support for child care and aged care to recognise the importance of extended families.

[2] However, the Community Development Employment Projects scheme will continue to be managed by community organisations and reflect individual and community and regional development goals. The allocation of funded places will now be made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services regional offices. Regional councils will continue until July 2005 and work with the minister to identify the form of future regional structures.

Australia) and Ngaanyatjarra (Kalgoorlie, Western Australia) regions. Since the collection of information from schemes involved in this study, a number have also undergone 'corporatisation'.

Funding for Community Development Employment Projects scheme

The government allocates funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services based on a national allocation of participant places. The budget is calculated according to a formula which multiples the number of places available (currently 36 550 in 2004) by the 'average per participant' rate which is differentiated according to remote and non-remote Australian Taxation Office classifications. To this amount are added on-costs which are calculated at fixed rates and also differentiated by remote and non-remote Australian Taxation Office classifications. On-costs are based on submissions provided by Community Development Employment Projects organisations detailing a 'target employment level' (the maximum number of participants' places made available to the organisation). This information is used to determine a notional amount of on-cost funding. Wages are based on actual participation. The budget is revised annually as part of the forward estimates process and, as a rule, increases on an indexed basis.

In 2003–04 the budget for the Community Development Employment Projects scheme was $519 million. This comprised $389 million for wages, $119 million for on-costs, and $111 million for the wages component for 1000 places under the Working for Families initiative. Over 60% of total funding for the scheme is offset against participants' rights to income benefits.

Wages and on-costs

As already noted, participants voluntarily relinquish their rights to income benefits and instead work on Community Development Employment Projects scheme approved activities for award wages. These wages are a direct offset against income benefit entitlements. Wages are allocated according to the number of participants at an 'average per participant rate'. For 2003–04, this rate was $217.00 per week for participants in remote Community Development Employment Projects schemes and $196.00 per week for those in non-remote schemes.

On-costs are set annually and are provided for the running costs associated with Community Development Employment Projects scheme activities. They are distributed by the Employment and Training Branch of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services according to a pre-determined formula and are then allocated by the appropriate regional office on a needs basis to Community Development Employment Projects organisations. On-cost rates for 2003–04 comprise $3225 per participant in remote areas and $3000 per participant in non-remote areas.

Eligibility to join Community Development Employment Projects scheme

Any person who is 16 years or over, not in full-time secondary schooling, or on a 'sickness allowance' benefit is eligible to participate in the scheme. They must have been first assessed as eligible by Centrelink. However, 15-year-olds on Youth Allowance benefits and not in full-time secondary schooling may also join the scheme. This means that those who are ineligible to participate in the scheme are: full-time secondary students; recipients of Sickness Allowance; 15 years of age and not in receipt of Youth Allowance; or full-time students in receipt of ABSTUDY or AUSTUDY Living Allowance payments, or Youth Allowance (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services 2003).

Community Development Employment Projects scheme activities

A variety of community-oriented tasks and income-producing ventures are possible under the scheme. In addition, funds are also available for schemes which aim to preserve and promote traditional cultures, and for host employers who take on participants as trainees or apprentices or other employees.

Profile of scheme participants

As already noted, there were 35 089 participants in Community Development Employment Projects schemes nationwide by 22 August 2003. Of these, just over 90% of males and females were Indigenous. The majority of all participants, almost two-thirds (60.7%), were male.

Age profile

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme seems to be most important for those who are between the ages of 18 and 25 years. In August 2003 almost two-thirds of participants were between the ages of 26 and 64 years. There were just under a third in the 18–25 years age group, and just over 6% in the 15–17 years age group. Minimal numbers were 65 years or older. Table 2 provides a breakdown of participation rates in terms of 2001 population figures.

Table 2: Participants by age group

Age group	No. of participants	% of participants	No. of Indigenous people in population 2002 census	Participation rate for age-group based on 2001 figures
15–17	2 320	6.6	26 712	8.7
18–25	10 595	30.2	54 806	19.3
26–64	22 043	62.8	156 118	14.1
65+	131	0.4	11 437	1.1
Total 15–65	**35 089**	**100.0**	**249 073**	**8.6**

Source: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services unpublished data (2003); ABS (2001, 2003); ABS Census of Population and Housing unpublished data (2001)

There is currently a view that the Community Development Employment Projects scheme might act as an incentive for young people to leave school and to seek employment in projects auspiced by the scheme. Table 2 indicates that, in 2003, the participation rate for 15 to 17-year-olds was just 8.7%. It was more than double this figure for 18 to 25-year-olds. As at 1 July 1999, 2000 and 2001, there was a total of 27 918 Indigenous students who were 13 years of age across those years. Of this group there were 57.5% still in school as at 1 July 2003. This means that well over a third (43.5%) of the group was no longer in school. The numbers of 15 to 17-year-olds in the corresponding cohorts who were no longer in school by 1 July 2003 are substantial. However, it does not appear that secondary school students are dropping out of school to register with the Community Development Employment Projects scheme. Information from scheme managers in rural and remote areas also indicates that participation in the scheme is low for those of secondary school age. It seems, however, that the scheme may be more important to individuals as they become older. Although the greatest percentage of participants relates to those between the ages of 26 and 64 years, participation of the 18–25 year age group is higher than for all other age groups.[3]

[3] In 2003 there were 16 041 Indigenous 15–17-year-olds still in school (ABS 2003) and 2320 in Community Development Employment Projects schemes (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services 2003). There were 27 918 Indigenous secondary school students who were 13 years of age as at 1 July 1999, 2000 and 2001. By 1 July 2003 these students were 17 years, 16 years and 15 years

When scheme age group figures are broken down by gender, it appears that, apart from 15 to 17-year-olds and those who are 65 years and over, the proportion of participants is slightly greater for males than for females. There may reasons for this difference. Female participants with children may have to forego certain benefits available to them (for example, telephone concessions) if they join this scheme. Indeed, females are often advised of these consequences when they make inquiries about joining the scheme, and some decide against participation. Table 3 provides a breakdown of participants by age and gender.

Table 3: Participants by age and gender as at August 2003

Age group	Female	Male
15–17	7.1	6.3
18–25	28.6	31.3
26–64	64.1	62.0
65+	0.3	0.4
	100.0	**100.0**

Biddle (2003) provides additional information on scheme participants. He cites analyses of survey data on under-employment conducted by Hunter (2002a). These indicate that, although those who decide to join the scheme obtain access to part-time work, they are much more likely to experience underemployment than are other non-scheme workers. Female participants are also more likely to experience higher levels of under-employment than males. Biddle also reports on 2001 census data to demonstrate that scheme participants are more likely to be engaged in part-time employment than other employed Indigenous workers, and less likely to have a post-school qualification. In addition, they are twice as likely to be working in non-skilled jobs than other employed Indigenous Australians.

Regional locations

The locations of the various schemes and participants within them can be described in terms of remote and non-remote locations. This information is provided in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission regional clusters in table 4.

of age respectively. As already noted, the ABS reports that there were 16 041 Indigenous students still in school by 2003, representing 57.5% of the total 1999, 2000 and 2001 cohort. This means that 11 877 (43.5%) of the group was not in school by 1 July 2003.

Table 4: Scheme participants by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission regional cluster as at 30 June 2003

Regional cluster	CDEP organisations	Non-remote	Participants	
			Remote	**Total**
Sydney	30	3 241	0	**3 241**
Wagga Wagga	28	2 351	0	**2 351**
Victoria	9	976	0	**976**
Brisbane	12	2 294	40	**2 334**
Cairns	31	2 025	3 960	**5 985**
Perth	30	2 609	2 513	**5 122**
Broome	39	0	4 571	**4 571**
Adelaide	33	1 405	1 138	**2 543**
Tasmania	2	96	48	**144**
Darwin	36	0	5 779	**5 779**
Alice Springs	22		2 136	**2 136**
Total	**272**	**14 997**	**20 185**	**35 182**

Source: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (2003)

Performance measures, targets and outcomes, 2000–2003

The main performance measures established for the scheme by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in the 2002–2003 period were met at varying levels of achievement (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2003).

1 Utilisation of funded participant places

In 2000–2001 there was a 94% utilisation of funds allocated for participant places in the scheme nationwide (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2002). By 2002–2003 this had increased to 100% (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2003).

2 Training provided in 75% of work activities

This target was achieved in 2000–2001 with more than three-quarters of work programs conducted through the scheme reporting that training had been provided for participants in a number of diverse industry sectors. These included administration, information technology, retail, tourism, media, agriculture and horticulture, building and construction, mechanics, health services, environmental resource management, and essential services provision (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2001). The target for training to be provided in 75% of work activities was also achieved in 2002–2003. According to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, participants received training in administration, broadcasting, aquaculture, and aged care (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2003).

3 Participation of 35 500 participants in Community Development Employment Projects schemes

This target was reached in 2002–2003 with the annual report recording 35 182 participants as at 30 June. There were almost double this number of 'participations' recorded throughout the financial year (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2003).

4 Locating employment outside Community Development Employment Projects schemes for 5% of participants

Figures provided in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission annual report for 2000–2001 indicate that about 3000 participants found full-time, part-time and seasonal employment in mainstream labour markets. This represents 9.2% of the participants engaged in schemes in that year. The report also notes that over a third of participants were able to generate extra income from other work (including municipal activities, caring for the land, and part-time work with external employers).

The difficulties of arriving at accurate estimates of the proportion of participants who move into external work are also explained in the annual report. In 2002–2003, the 5% target was reached and it was estimated that about 3500 (about 10%) obtained full-time, part-time or seasonal mainstream employment. The Community Development Employment Projects scheme also enabled over a third of participants to increase their wages by being involved in contracts with local district councils, or part-time work with other employers. However, it must also be taken into account that, in 2002–2003, there were 21 587 participants who left the program. Well over a third did not specify reasons for doing so. A small group (18.9%) provided reasons related to employment and training. The remainder left for other reasons.

5 Improved community infrastructure and access to services

Almost 750 activities under taken through the Community Development Employment Projects scheme were related to the provision of municipal services and community infrastructure and support. Moreover, this scheme is also a provider of essential services, especially in remote areas. These include local and state and territory government services.

6 Economic development

The scheme is also expected to contribute to Indigenous economic development through the development of commercial activities, and the provision of scheme labour to other Indigenous businesses; for example, in 2002–2003 the scheme included 760 activities involving business development and assistance. This far exceeded its target for 46 such activities in that year. Participants were also involved in 1699 different commercial activities. This represented 40% of activities involving scheme participants (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2003).

7 Training

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission annual report indicates that more than 3000 participants were involved in accredited training nationwide.

Criticisms of Community Development Employment Projects schemes

Biddle (2003) reports that criticism of Community Development Employment Projects schemes is generally directed at the failure of the scheme to lead to increased engagement with the real or productive economy, and the use of scheme statistics by governments to distort unemployment figures. There is also criticism based on the perception that there is a major potential for the scheme to discourage young students from school completion. Such criticisms need to be evaluated in terms of accuracy, and in the context of the role that the scheme plays in different locations and at different stages of an individual's life.

There is also a perception that scheme participants do not receive award rates. However, sub-clause 12.6 of the 'General terms and conditions relating to grants' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services 2003) specifies that award rates are to be paid. It categorically states that

Community Development Employment Projects schemes 'must ensure that CDEP wages and conditions that apply to CDEP participants when performing their work activities comply with all relevant awards and any requirement under state/territory and/or federal legislation. If no applicable award applies state/territory minimum conditions of employment apply' (p.25). In addition, Australian Taxation Office policy states that, where participants are working under a specific award or agreement, Community Development Employment Projects organisations must abide by the requirements of awards and agreements.

Nevertheless, Biddle makes good sense when he notes that 'any movement off the Community Development Employment Projects scheme requires the availability of employment substitutes, options not often present in the remote areas' (Biddle 2003, p.13).

Work and training in rural and remote regions

As already noted, information on community needs, and benefits from and challenges to the Community Development Employment Projects scheme, was obtained from regional councillors in two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission regions for this study. One region was in the Northern Territory (Tennant Creek region), the other from South-East Queensland (Roma region). Information on the activities, benefits and challenges of the various schemes in these regions was also collected from managers, and management committee members of the various Community Development Employment Projects schemes. Lecturers and managers provided information on training issues.

Community Development Employment Projects schemes in the Tennant Creek region included three very remote communities along or just off the Sturt Highway from Alice Springs to Tennant Creek (Thangenrenke, Ali Curung) and along the same highway to Elliott (Elliott) and schemes operating in the Tennant Creek township (Julalikari Buramana, Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation, Pappulu Appar Kari Language Centre). Schemes from the Roma region included Toowoomba, Bidjara (Charleville), and Kamilaroi (St George and Dirrabandi) and Cherbourg, the latter representing a very remote community in this region. The size of these schemes varied, ranging from a very small number of participants in the Thangkenharenge (Barrow Creek) scheme to over 300 or so in the Cherbourg scheme. Case studies of each of the schemes are given in supporting documents available at <http:// www.ncver.edu.au>.

Regional needs

Regional councillors were asked to identify what they saw as the needs for their communities. In the main, councillors from both areas agreed that their communities needed to develop the industry and professional skills required by all communities, whether they be mainstream or Indigenous. There was a need for Indigenous people to acquire the political and governance skills to enable them to participate responsibly on boards of Indigenous organisations, and to develop the negotiation and decision-making skills to allow them to participate in mainstream local, state and Indigenous politics. They required skills to enable them to protect and promote their culture and heritage.

In addition, Indigenous people needed the skills and knowledge to enable them to participate in professional, law and order, business, administration and trade occupations. Like mainstream communities, Indigenous communities required solicitors, health workers, doctors, dentists, nurses, aged care and child care workers, teachers, policemen, accountants, bookkeepers, carpenters, plumbers and gasfitters, construction workers, carpenters, electricians, welders and automotive mechanics. Indigenous communities also required individuals with tickets and licences for operating heavy machinery (including trucks, buses, cars, chainsaws, backhoes, fronthoes, graders, bobcats, and cherry pickers). In the Bidjara scheme they required tickets for operating sawmilling equipment. They required the skills and knowledge necessary for running enterprises, and administration skills for ensuring that organisations ran smoothly and efficiently. Above all, communities required their young people to be able to compete in schools, society and in the job market without discrimination.

That communities would have ready access to such skills when they were required, and more importantly, be able to pass on this expertise to future generations were seen as major advantages of having community members develop expertise in these areas and acquiring professional and trade qualifications, and special licences.

Apart from the acquisition of qualifications and the development of specific occupational skills, also required was the development of successful job-seeking skills. These included skills in writing resumes, looking for jobs, preparing job applications, and attending interviews. Training Indigenous people to 'sell' themselves in an interview was particularly important as it was acknowledged that self-promotion was not generally practised in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Training in basic communication and negotiation skills was required to help community members to settle arguments without resorting to violence.

Work activities

Participants were involved in work activities in community services, municipal activities, creative arts and crafts, language maintenance and translation, interpreter services, night patrols, health centres, housing repairs and maintenance, radio broadcasting, property and housing maintenance, and community or scheme enterprises. In addition, participants worked with a variety of external employers in a variety of industries.

Information from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission annual report provided by Biddle (2003) indicates that these activities are representative of the types of activities available to scheme participants nationwide.

Community services and health

Participants were involved in a variety of community service activities ranging from collecting firewood for seniors, to providing refuge for women and children. For example, Elliott's community service activities include a women's centre with responsibility for running childcare, including out-of-school-hours care and vacation care, and providing support for the elderly in terms of providing blankets and helping with washing activities. Julalikari Buramana Community Development Employment Projects and Ali Curung Community Development Employment Projects schemes also undertook wood collection activities. In the Cherbourg scheme participants in community organisations provided care for the elderly, including help with shopping, and assisting them on 'golden holidays'. (These are excursions or holidays specifically for senior citizens.) They worked as childcare and aged care workers, as carers in the women's and children's shelters, and in the drug and alcohol abuse rehabilitation centre. Pappul Apparr Kari provided Indigenous citizens with interpreting services when they needed to go to the courts, or to legal aid organisations and hospitals. Scheme workers also worked in health clinics in communities which had Indigenous health centres and hospitals.

Law and justice

Participants were also involved in night patrols or their equivalents. The purpose of night patrol activities is to monitor night activities and to remove individuals from situations that might result in incarceration or physical harm. For example, night patrols in Ali Curung involved participants walking or driving around the community checking for any violence or disturbance and helping to remove people from situations which may lead to incarceration. In Elliott, the aim of the night patrols was also similar. However, the Elliott night patrol also helped with driving senior citizens back to their homes and ensuring that children were not at risk. The night patrols in Elliott worked on the same nights as did the police. In this way the patrols were able to settle disputes before the police were required. In Toowoomba, participants were involved in the Murri foot patrol group. In Cherbourg, night patrol participants worked with the community police during these patrols. Participants were also involved as administrative assistants with community or state

police. Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation also operated a night patrol staffed by scheme participants.

Repairs and maintenance

Participants were also involved in the repair and maintenance of aboriginal housing. For example, the Julalikari Buramana centre aimed to assist and train community members to undertake basic repair and maintenance on their houses. In Elliott, participants are involved in taking care of buildings and facilities, including construction, plumbing, renovations, upgrading, painting and tiling. The Bidjara scheme (servicing Charleville and surrounding areas) has a workshop which provides welding and gasfitting repair services for aboriginal and other community housing. In Cherbourg, participants worked on the fencing of community houses. Participants who had completed construction apprenticeships or traineeships were involved in building and working on repairs and maintenance to community houses.

Municipal duties

Municipal activities were a major feature in schemes which were closely associated with district councils or resource centres responsible for out-stations (for example, Cherbourg, Ali Curung, Julalikari Buramana). Scheme participants worked in administrative positions in local council offices or chambers. They formed part of work groups which were charged with the construction and maintenance of roads, parks and gardens, the collection of rubbish, and the operation of the water treatment and sewage treatment plants. Controlling noxious weeds, running the council stores facility, mowing public lawns and parks and gardens were other scheme activities. The Julalikari Buramana scheme had participants involved in the construction and maintenance of bough shelters, in road maintenance, and upgrading and maintenance of parks and gardens. They were also involved in ensuring that community buildings and ablution blocks were operational. The Elliott scheme had participants involved in fencing, planting and maintaining trees and shrubs, and maintaining roads and grounds, as well as operating the machinery required for these activities. The Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation scheme was involved in municipal activities, including the maintenance of lawns and gardens around public facilities, and planting and maintaining shrubs and trees in the main street and along the major highway leading in and out of Tennant Creek. It also had responsibility for the management of the local tip and recycling facilities. However, this was done as a fee-for-service activity.

Arts and crafts

The production of art and craft (separately by males and females) was a regular feature of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme work. In the Ali Curung, Elliott, Thangerenke, Pappulu Appar Kari and Toowoomba schemes, male and female participants spent time producing art and craft pieces with their sale as the ultimate aim. These included art work, wood carvings, emu egg carvings, and furniture. In some schemes a major proportion of participants were involved in arts and crafts activities. Keeping in mind that not all individuals, whether they be Indigenous Australians or Australians from mainstream cultures, have an ability for art or creative pursuits, the value of having large numbers of participants being involved in such activities is not clear.

Language preservation and promotion

The operation of the language centre, Papulu Aparr Kari in Tennant Creek, is also supported by Community Development Employment Projects scheme funds. Here participants work in activities concerned with preserving, maintaining, and promoting the aboriginal language. This includes translating the Bible into Indigenous languages, providing interpreting services for community members and government agencies (departments of health, police, hospitals) and compiling dictionaries. Participants are also involved in producing teaching aids for schools,

producing films and radio programs, translation and printing for government agencies, and conducting research into aboriginal life.

Radio and television

Participants were also involved in producing radio and television programs. This was the case for participants in the Ali Curung, Cherbourg, and Papulu Aparr Kari schemes.

Host employment

Scheme participants work in a variety of roles with host employers. In the main, this host employment was far more prevalent and available for the South-East Queensland schemes such as Toowoomba, Kamilaroi, Cherbourg, and Bidjara than for Northern Territory schemes. Participants in these schemes worked for a variety of employers in a variety of industries. These included schools and kindergartens, meatworks, general businesses, Indigenous agencies, supermarkets, shops and local stores, printers, golf courses, automotive workshops, panel-beating workshops, laundries, community service organisations, a tourist information centre, and local gyms.

They generally worked as teacher aides or cleaners in schools and kindergartens. They also worked as receptionists and administrative assistants in community service organisations and business and in aboriginal corporations and agencies. They were employed as janitors and cleaners in child care, aged care and other community service facilities, and in local mainstream businesses and Aboriginal corporations and agencies. They worked as stick pickers in the cotton farming districts when this was available, and process workers and labourers in meatworks. They also worked as shop assistants in local supermarkets, stores and cafes; groundsmen in schools and golf clubs; labourers and spray painters in automotive body shops; carpenters and labourers in building companies; and gym instructors in local gyms. There was one hairdressing trainee with a local hairdresser.

Enterprises

In the main, the nature of enterprises established by the Community Development Employment Projects schemes depended as much on geographic location as it did on the imagination of scheme managers, their committees, and participants. The type of enterprise also depended on the size of the scheme, with larger schemes being able to access larger amounts of on-costs for the purchase of buildings, equipment and materials. However, even smaller schemes with lower budgets were able to implement innovative activities which required substantial investment of capital. Enterprises covered a great variety of activities, and included nurseries, vineyards, retail dress shops, garment production workshops, tourist shops, poultry farms, tip management and so on. A fuller description of the various types of enterprises run by each of the different schemes are described in table 5.

Table 5: Enterprises run by different Community Development Employment Projects programs

CDEP scheme	Commercial enterprises
Ali Curung	Automotive workshop, community shop
Julalikara Buramana	Vegetable gardens, poultry pens
Julalikara Aboriginal Corporation	Tips and recycling management, nursery, poultry farm, public works contracts
Elliot	Service station
Pappul Aparr Kari	Translation and printing services, production of films and radio programs, recording of aboriginal songs and production of CDs
Bidjara	Sawmill, garment construction and embroidery, furniture making, tourist shop, art and craft
Kamillaroi	Vineyard, market garden, garment construction, retail dress shop, tree lopping, labour hire
Toowoomba	Art and crafts, labour hire
Cherbourg	Museum, emu farm, cattle and stud farm, meatwork facilities

On-the-job training and experience

Workers are involved in different activities, and may have varying levels of motivation to acquire experience, skills and knowledge. Keeping this in mind, it is clear that participants have opportunities to learn a variety of practical skills, and acquire valuable experience from being engaged in Community Development Employment Projects scheme tasks or activities. This experience can also be termed informal on-the-job training. For the majority of scheme workers, this was the most prevalent form of training. However, this varied according to workplace or situation, occupation and role. On-the-job training (generally delivered by peers and supervisors) also enabled participants to learn task-specific and technical skills and knowledge associated with their particular activities, as well as the more generic skills associated with working for and with others. However, in almost all instances, being engaged in work enabled workers to develop appropriate work habits. These included getting to work on time, coming regularly to work and working with others. In all but one of the schemes visited, coming to work was enforced by a 'no work no pay rule'. In some cases, especially when there was a specific formal course associated with skill and knowledge development, on-the-job training through experience often enhanced particular skills, knowledge and dispositions. There was only one scheme where a 'no work no pay' rule was believed not to affect motivation of participants to attend work on a regular basis. However, in this scheme the recent introduction of more sanctions on access to benefits has also had a positive impact on work attendance.

On-the-job training helped workers to hone the skills required for the operation of heavy and light machinery and motor vehicles, construction, repair and maintenance of houses, and for plumbing, gasfitting and welding. Workers in sewing workshops acquired experience, skills and knowledge required for garment construction and embroidery, and for meeting deadlines. Those working in essential services in local councils acquired the experience and developed skills and knowledge about water and sewage treatment, and warehousing and accounting for equipment. Those engaged in night patrols and in security and policing acquired the experience and knowledge required for effective conflict resolution and negotiation. Others gained experience, skills and knowledge in processing meat, automotive mechanics, panel beating, horticulture, retail, media production and broadcasting. Those working in Community Development Employment Projects enterprises acquired experience in how to run a private business, in addition to gaining enterprise-specific skills. Many workers hosted out to employers (including Indigenous and government agencies) learnt office and business administration, basic bookkeeping and accounting, in addition to receptionist and clerical skills. Skills and experience in animal husbandry, fencing and other jackeroo activities, cotton farming, vegetable gardening, yard maintenance, tree-lopping, cleaning, gardening, viticulture, and janitorial work were also acquired on the job. Teacher aides in schools and kindergartens developed their skills working with teachers and with children, while student teachers developed their teaching and supervisory skills. Workers in child care and aged care centres learnt how to deal with the groups who required attention, caring and empathy. Health workers learnt nursing skills, while those in recreation and sport areas learnt to coach and lead teams. Interpreters from the language centre learnt more about the operation of hospitals, courts, legal aid and the police force. Those in art and craft programs had opportunities to create and manufacture artefacts and art works. Those working in museums learnt the skills of greeting and giving explanations about objects and events to tourists.

Formal off-the-job training: Short and long courses

Apart from the on-the-job training and experience that scheme workers could obtain from their involvement in scheme activities and in mainstream employment, these workers were also able to access formal training in a variety of fields. These included formal short courses (generally day or week-long courses) aimed at skills development and the acquisition of licences and tickets necessary for driving and/or operating heavy machinery (for example, trucks, buses and cars, chainsaws, forklifts, backhoes, fronthoes, graders, cherry pickers, bobcats, and sawmilling machinery). Participants were also involved in formal longer programs from accredited courses

(land management, teacher training) and national training packages which led to Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications, including hospitality, retail, construction, welding and business administration.

In Ali Curung, participants had attended courses for the preparation of personnel for night patrols, and training for council members to develop skills in conducting meetings and in administration. They had undertaken driver and teacher training courses, and courses in first aid, sport and recreation coaching, mechanics, and radio and television program production and broadcasting. They had attended computer training programs especially for the use of email, and nutrition and home-maker programs.

Elliott participants had also attended short courses in welding, and in operating the Community Development Employment Projects scheme manager system. They had undertaken childcare courses from the Community Services Training Package, and Train the Trainer courses for supervisors. The Julalikari scheme had trainees undertaking programs in business administration, automotive retail, panel beating and retail.

Julalikari Buramana participants had attended land management courses and programs aimed at increasing literacy and numeracy. In the scheme also were participants who had been involved in building and construction traineeships, in jackeroo courses and in horticulture courses focusing on parks and gardens.

Participants in the Papulu Apparr-Kari scheme had undertaken courses in a wide variety of areas, including office management, accounting, business, aboriginal management, advanced English and vernacular literacy, Indigenous legal studies, community development facilitation (aboriginal landcare), aboriginal community organisations, assessment and workplace training, and general education for adults. They had also been involved in video production, multi-media training, work safety and occupational health and safety policy, first aid, interpreting training, driving courses (medium rigid vehicle and four-wheel driving) registrar training and Avid software editing training).

Participants from the Bidjara scheme (Charleville and surrounding areas) were involved in short courses aimed at acquiring a 'blue card' which certified their understanding of occupational health and safety issues. The acquisition of tickets for operating chainsaws, bobcats and sawmilling equipment was another important area for the scheme. Longer courses included business administration programs. A number of Bidjara participants were involved in office administration traineeship programs with local Indigenous and mainstream companies.

Cherbourg scheme participants had also been involved in short courses aimed at acquiring licences and tickets for operating heavy vehicles and machinery. They had undertaken training programs aimed to increase their knowledge of council rules and equipment. Trainee teachers and teacher aides had been or are involved in the Remote Area Teacher Preparation program. Participants had also undertaken apprenticeships in carpentry and joinery, and automotive mechanics.

Kamilaroi participants had undertaken short courses to enable them to acquire tickets and licences to operate heavy equipment and machinery (backhoes, back end loaders, fronthoes). Courses of longer duration in which they had been involved included viticulture traineeships, the Remote Area Teacher Preparation program for trainee teacher aides and teachers, and courses in sports and recreation, automotive retail, motor mechanics, screen printing, dressmaking, real estate, health services, horticulture, hospitality, child protection, and literacy and numeracy.

In the main, scheme managers and committee members were satisfied with the training provided by registered training organisations and other training providers, and the willingness and commitment of trainers to their work. This is not a surprising finding as training organisations had also been selected because of their expertise and cultural sensitivity. This was especially the case for registered training organisations in the Northern Territory as it was important for them to understand how attendance at sorry camps and initiation ceremonies could interrupt training.

Registered training organisations in South-East Queensland were selected on criteria of availability, affordability, and their willingness to customise training to the needs of participants.

Apprenticeships and traineeships

In general, the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships in rural and remote communities is not widespread. Cherbourg reported over 30 apprentices over the last seven years. The Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation reported about 70 apprentices and trainees over the last five years. However, it must be remembered that the ability of individuals to undertake apprenticeships in rural and remote communities and out-stations is dependent upon access to workplace assessors, the availability of jobs appropriate for these apprenticeships and traineeships, and the adequacy of equipment and practical experience. This generally means that qualified tradespersons must be willing to reside in the community and to provide employment and skills training for the apprentice. There must also be suitable accommodation for such personnel and other trainers. Apprentices and trainees must have access to specific off-the-job training programs in specific modules. Access to qualified tradespeople is not readily available to rural and remote communities, and there are difficulties in ensuring access to off-the-job training in specific modules required to complete certain qualifications. Nevertheless, the majority of apprenticeships which had been undertaken across the schemes in this study were in building and construction. The majority of traineeships had been undertaken in office administration, retail, hospitality, and automotive areas. Kamilaroi reported two trainees currently undertaking a viticulture program.

Information about the training experience of apprentices and trainees hired by the above-mentioned Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation (through its group training company scheme and Community Development Employment Projects scheme) provides some insight into the various training difficulties faced by apprentices and trainees in rural and remote communities. (See the case studies for detail relating to training experiences of apprentices and trainees.) The Julalikari Aboriginal Corporation is multifaceted and operates a resource centre, a job placement program, construction workshops, and community services (aged care, disability care), a Community Development Employment Projects scheme and night patrol and homemaker programs. Since 1995 it has had about 70 apprentices and trainees on its books. Since 1997 it has also had its own registered training organisation. The corporation also acts much like a group training company in that it manages the benefits available to apprentices and trainees, does all the paper work, and pays their wages. It also provides tools to apprentices and trainees which must be returned in the event of the apprentice or trainee leaving the company. Over the last five years the majority of Julalikari apprentices (generally men) have undertaken apprenticeships in the building and construction trades (including electrical, plumbing, painting and decorating, welding and gasfitting). Traineeships have been undertaken in automotive, environmental health, education, hospitality, retail and office administration areas. The majority of women have been involved in arts and crafts programs.

Training completion

As a rule, respondents were not able to provide exact figures on the total numbers of scheme participants who had been involved in, or had completed short or long courses. However, they did report that, in the main, those who undertook short courses generally completed these courses. Courses of longer duration generally experienced higher dropout rates. In some schemes completion of short courses was encouraged since participants were charged for any courses arranged for them by the scheme and which they did not complete.

Barriers to training completion

Information on barriers to training completion has been provided by Community Development Employment Projects scheme managers as well as managers and/or lecturers from Julalikari registered training organisation, Batchelor College of Indigenous Education and the Institute for Aboriginal Development. Reasons for not completing either long or short courses were varied, with some individuals experiencing multiple barriers. Barriers were related to the lack of access to adequate training, resources and support, and the need to attend to cultural responsibilities and obligations. Training completion was also reduced if teachers did not show appropriate awareness and sensitivity and where students had low levels of literacy and numeracy. Although there is a view that online learning may be used to address inadequate access to training in the bush, inadequate telecommunications infrastructure was a major barrier to this.

Multiple barriers

Low general ability, lack of willingness and commitment of students to apply themselves and to invest time in training, and inadequate basic skills to complete assignments and assessments combined to reduce an individual's ability to complete the training. There were cases where individuals had embarked on a course of study to follow the example of friends or relatives who had commenced the course. However, once in the course, these individuals discovered that the course either required a lot of time and commitment, or that they had difficulties in understanding concepts and completing assignments. The realisation that they did not have the willingness to find the time, or have the literacy skills required, led such individuals to cease their studies.

Inadequate learning support

Training completion was also affected by the assistance available from instructors or Indigenous support officers from registered training organisations. Although, as already noted, there was general satisfaction with support from registered training organisations, a number of schemes reported that they had experienced problems obtaining adequate learning support for participants, often also due to the high turnover of these instructors or support officers. During the wet season it was also difficult for instructors and support officers to enter very remote communities or out-stations because of the inaccessibility of dirt roads.

Registered training organisations also experienced problems establishing training plans and making arrangements for trainees who had jobs in very remote areas (for example, cattle stations which are far from the rural township). Julalikari registered training organisation reported that, in organising a 'stockman' program for trainees, it had to arrange for the trainee to be transported to the station and then make regular visits to monitor training and conduct assessments. This becomes especially expensive for registered training organisations, and can impact on their viability, and on the ability of trainees to complete training.

Lack of access to specific learning resources

Some apprenticeship programs cannot be completed without apprentices spending some time away from home. This is because the workplace experience required to demonstrate a certain competency may not be available in the township. For example, Julalikari apprentices may have to leave town (Tennant Creek) to attend 'block training' (that is, a few weeks at a time in Alice Springs or Darwin). It is also very difficult for apprentices in towns like Tennant Creek to complete all the modules required for trades such as scaffolding, roofing and general construction. This is because the types of buildings built in a rural and remote town may not provide apprentices with the required experiences to enable them to demonstrate competence of a certain skill.

Leaving home to attend training

In addition to providing opportunities for apprentices to access relevant modules, and to experience what it is like to live in a larger town, leaving the town to undertake training may also have a number of disadvantages for the student and their families. A view was expressed by one registered training organisation manager that, when students moved to Alice Springs or Darwin to participate in block training or other courses, the more adventurous students, not unlike students from other cultures, had opportunities to 'play up'. This is because they found themselves away from the discipline of wives and families. In contrast, the less adventurous students may become homesick and want to come home. There are also those students who do not want to leave home to attend training. These factors were also considered to affect training completion. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that all Indigenous young people in rural and remote areas do not want to leave home to experience life and work in the larger towns or cities.

Time and resources to attend to cultural and family obligations

Attending 'ceremony' duties may also interrupt 'block training' obligations for young male apprentices and trainees in the more remote communities. In some cases, registered training organisations like Julalikari have had to provide one-on-one tuition for those who fall behind in their work because of these and other cultural responsibilities. Although this may help the individual student, it also becomes very expensive for the registered training organisation. Completion was also hindered by the need for students to attend funerals which interrupted the sequence of training and sometimes made it difficult for individuals to catch up on work.

Another factor perceived to affect training completion was the need for apprentices and trainees, when asked, to share wages with relatives. Sometimes this made some apprentices give up their jobs and the program.

Lack of cultural sensitivity in training delivery

As already noted, there was general satisfaction with training delivery. Nevertheless, there were also cases where trainees had not received adequate face-to-face support and assistance from instructors, or where providers had found it hard to accommodate Indigenous practices. There was a view that trainers or instructors needed to be more patient and more sensitive with individual participants and to guard against being too aggressive in their delivery. The need to be less aggressive or confronting with students was considered to be especially important as there was always the risk that students may feel 'shame' and may opt not to continue with training because of this. Trainers and instructors needed to make greater use of visual aids, provide practical demonstrations of skills, and slow down the pace of delivery so that if extra time were needed for students to complete a module, this was provided. Individuals reported that they wanted teachers who gave them respect and who did not adopt manners considered to be superior, or 'flash'. They wanted teachers who were not 'downgrading' and were prepared to have a joke with students.

There was also a need for trainers and instructors to understand that, although students may be able to perform a certain practical competency, they could experience difficulties with the written work required for demonstrating underpinning knowledge. It was also important for trainers to understand that 'shyness' might affect students' willingness to engage in or complete their training. As already noted, it was crucial that trainers and instructors understood how cultural responsibilities (attendance at sorry camps, and responsibilities for caring for family members in case of sickness) may affect students' ability to complete training in prescribed times.

Low levels of literacy and numeracy

Low levels of literacy and numeracy may also affect participant willingness to engage in, or their ability to complete, training. It is important for those in training and who are limited by low

literacy and numeracy that arrangements are made for them to receive more personalised tuition. However, this increased attention becomes quite expensive for registered training organisations.

Inadequate telecommunications infrastructure

Another problem for students in rural and remote communities is the inadequacy of the telecommunications infrastructure. For example, students taking the online Frontline Management program (a program for supervisors and managers) find the down-loading of materials slow and inefficient. Although broadband facilities would speed up the down-loading of documents, there is also a recognition of the high cost of such installations. Slowness of connections was also another factor which reduced student motivation to complete training programs.

Benefits for communities

Regional councillors and managers and other representatives from schemes held the view that Community Development Employment Projects schemes in rural and remote communities provided benefits for both Indigenous and mainstream communities. Although there were suggestions for improvements in relation to the way in which allocations of funded places to various groups were made, and concerns about the ability of participants to gain mainstream unsubsidised employment, there was substantial agreement that Community Development Employment Projects schemes should remain as a major employment program.

Benefits were generally perceived to be related to a reduction of unemployment rates in the community, development of tradespersons and professionals, ability to mount projects and commercial enterprises to suit local conditions, positive role modelling, reduced rates of incarceration, and opportunities to become part of the economic life of mainstream communities.

Reductions in local unemployment rates

In the event of the scheme ceasing to exist, there was general consensus that it would reduce the viability of many rural and remote communities, especially out-stations. In addition, the local unemployment rate (especially in remote and very remote areas) would increase dramatically. Such views are supported by findings of studies based on statistical analyses of unemployment data which have highlighted the important role played by the Community Development Employment Projects scheme in reducing formal unemployment rates in rural and remote areas. For example, Lewis (2000) reports that without the scheme, unemployment rates for Indigenous Australians in the north of Australia would stand at 40% with projections to increase to 48% in 2006. Citing the work of Taylor (1998), Lewis also suggests that a further 25 000 jobs would have to be created in the next five years to accommodate Indigenous people. Hunter and Taylor (2001) indicate that, if the numbers of discouraged job seekers were also included in these calculations, jobs for 33 000 Indigenous Australians would need to be created by 2006 to achieve employment rates similar to those for Indigenous Australians. Altman also reports employment to population ratios for scheme and non-scheme communities and notes that this ratio is higher for Community Development Employment Projects communities (ratio=50%) than non-scheme communities (ratio=38%). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in its annual report (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 2003) uses 2001 ABS census data to indicate the impact of the scheme in reducing unemployment rates in remote regions of the nation. It noted that, if scheme numbers were included in the unemployment rate of different regional and remote areas, the rate would increase dramatically. It would increase from 23.3% to 32% for outer regional areas (an increase of about 8%), from 19.5% to 37.5% for remote areas (an increase of about 18%), and from 8.2% to 68.2% (an increase of 60%) for very remote areas.

Creating a pool of trained and qualified personnel

When completed, training programs were perceived to provide communities with trained and qualified personnel who would perform trade and skilled tasks which, in the past, had been performed by non-Indigenous tradespeople. In addition, there were non-tangible benefits derived from having individual community members involved in such programs. These were increased self-esteem, improved esteem in the eyes of their families, and increased social capital[4] of communities themselves.

Employers who hired scheme participants also received benefits in terms of reduced wages bills. In addition, they had access to a pool of talent and skill they may not have believed available.

Positive role modelling

Involvement in scheme employment or in training was also perceived to provide positive role models for children in communities, and for other individuals who were not in work and not in training. This was felt to be especially important for communities where children had never had parents or significant others gainfully employed in paid work.

Reduced rates of incarceration

Respondents were also of the view that the removal of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme would result in increased unemployment. It was considered that the end of the scheme would be likely to lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour (alcoholism, other substance abuse, and domestic violence) by those individuals who were potential participants in the scheme and result in disturbed community environments. Activities like night patrols (often staffed by scheme participants) also meant reduced intervention for the police and decreased the rate of incarceration.

Activities to suit local conditions

The block of funding accompanying the Community Development Employment Projects scheme enabled rural and remote communities to mount community development activities and commercial enterprises which would generate income for the scheme. For some communities and out-stations, the scheme provided the only form of economic activity. For large schemes (like Kamilaroi, Bidjara, Toowoomba), the Community Development Employment Projects funding brought in substantial amounts of money generally spent with local traders and shop keepers. This meant that an Indigenous organisation could become part of the mainstream economic life of the town in which it was located.

Benefits for individuals

Individuals were also perceived to gain major benefits from scheme participation. These related to employment and income benefits, the acquisition of experience, skills and qualifications, and social benefits.

[4] Social capital is defined as the accumulative benefit accruing to individuals and communities as a result of their engagement in community and civic activities and the consequent networks established, or skills and networks which result from collective, civic activities.

Employment and income

Engagement in paid part-time work and opportunities for 'top up' (increased wages) when extra work or higher duties were required or available, were major benefits derived by individuals. However, there was an acknowledgement that, although this income was higher than that available from unemployment benefits, it was far below income gained from full-time work. Time and time again, respondents (some of whom were or had been in Community Development Employment Projects schemes) expressed the desire for more hours of work. These findings are supported by Altman (2001) noting from previous research (cited in Altman & Grey 2000), that scheme workers were also able to supplement their 18 hours of work undertaken through the scheme, with top-up wages from scheme work in community enterprises, or a combination of scheme work and mainstream jobs. Altman (2001) also highlighted the fact that income realised from the Community Development Employment Projects scheme was lower than the average income for males in mainstream full- and part-time employment in the same regions.

That Community Development Employment Projects scheme has provided those with low skills and qualifications with access to employment at a time when employment in regional areas has declined has also been highlighted by Hunter (2002a, 2002b). Hunter believes that participation has also helped to 'cushion low-skilled Indigenous workers from the harsh realities of declining regional labour markets' (Hunter 2002a, 2002b, p.v). According to Hunter, the expansion of the scheme has meant that the decline in demand for low-skilled jobs in rural and remote locations has not affected Indigenous workers to the same extent as their non-Indigenous counterparts. In 1981, for example, Indigenous Australians who left school before the age of 14 years experienced more labour market disadvantage than their non-Indigenous counterparts. However, by 1996, the situation had reversed.

Experience, skills and qualifications

The scheme has also enabled individuals to access accredited training, and formal qualifications and licences. It has allowed them to acquire industry-specific or general work skills, knowledge and experience. Such benefits mean that individuals have been able to develop work histories and evidence of education to include on the resumes required for application to positions in external labour markets. Where apprenticeships and traineeships have been undertaken, the scheme has also enabled apprentices and trainees to obtain trade tools required for their training.

Social benefits

Apart from economic benefits, participants have been able to increase their self-esteem and confidence as a result of being engaged in work and training and acquiring qualifications. In turn, this has enabled them to either continue with further training or to apply for jobs. It has also provided many participants (and especially middle-aged individuals in Indigenous communities with restricted labour markets) with 'something to do, something to learn and somewhere to go'. This sense of purpose and increased motivation has also promoted an increased sense of wellbeing in participants.

For some, their voluntary involvement in schemes has also provided an incentive to curb the time devoted to binge drinking (especially in the days preceding work), which in turn has led to reduced alcoholism, reduced domestic violence, and decreased engagement in other non-acceptable behaviours.

Continuing challenges

Notwithstanding some major benefits derived by communities and individuals from their involvement in Community Development Employment Projects schemes, the following were

identified as issues that affect schemes' success in engaging participants in training. First, inadequate access to suitable training and resources (especially information technology infrastructure) in the bush was felt to be a major barrier to training participation. Second, poor basic literacy and numeracy skills made it difficult for participants to undertake training, especially in courses which require them to undertake written assignments. Third, cultural responsibilities often interfered with the ability of participants to attend and complete training.

Ensuring that suitable on-job experience is available for certain trades important to local communities (especially construction and joinery, welding, plumbing, mechanics and panel-beating, painting and decorating, and hospitality) was considered to be essential. There was also a need to improve access to accredited training for individuals in out-stations of main scheme organisations. There continued to be a need to find innovative ways to re-schedule training and assessment so that attendance at initiation ceremonies or sorry camps, did not act as a barrier to training completion. It was felt to be important to ensure that training delivery is effective and sensitive to the feelings of individuals (that is, non-aggressive, relaxed, down-to-earth, and non-threatening).

Because the majority of participants were involved only in part-time work, it was considered that the program should be structured to provide extra hours or 'topping up' for participants. A five-day week was preferred. Community leaders also believed that scheme participants should be provided with those benefits (especially superannuation benefits) available to other workers. This was especially the case for individuals who had spent many years on the program.

However, as the rules stand today (Australian Taxation Office 2004) the Community Development Employment Projects scheme is exempted from paying the Superannuation Guarantee Charge for employees receiving participant wages, or receiving top-up from scheme recurrent grants. However, they are obliged to pay the Superannuation Guarantee Charge for participants on top-up wages from other funding sources (for example, profit-generated income) if this income is over the amount of $450.00 in any calendar month. In this case the charge applies to the non-exempt portion of income. The organisation is also required to abide by the requirements of specific awards or agreements, and to pay the normal superannuation contribution for scheme employees who are not participants. Participants who would like to make their own contributions are also free to do so.

Hunter (2002a, 2002b) believes that the success of the scheme may encourage students to leave school early and not complete the educational qualifications essential for entry in the mainstream labour market. Notwithstanding, this does not seem to be true for 15 to 17-year-olds. However, the challenge is to protect the positive aspects of the scheme in its provision of employment in 'depressed labour markets' and assist in community development, while ensuring that all young Indigenous people are encouraged to complete their schooling.

Discussion and conclusions

Overview

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme provides Indigenous communities in remote and rural Australia with jobs and skills for members of their communities and supports a range of essential and desirable services to improve living conditions and health. The scheme also enables Indigenous agencies or institutions not attached to any particular community to operate for the benefit of Indigenous and mainstream cultures as a whole.

In providing funds for communities, the scheme empowers communities to determine what activities are required to improve their physical, psychological and social environments and to protect traditional cultures. It assists them to implement such programs of activities, and enables them to establish income-generating ventures.

The scheme also provides non-tangible benefits for both communities and individuals who participate in scheme activities. However, there continue to be challenges in terms of engaging participants in formal apprenticeships and traineeships (and completing them) as well as in longer-term training leading to qualifications. There are also substantial challenges for participants wishing to move into unsubsidised employment.

Increasing decision-making power

As already noted, the scheme has the capacity to provide remote communities with a substantial block of funding to enable them to decide on and implement program activities. Each of the different communities providing information to this project identified a list of activities which they had been able to introduce or to continue as a result of their accessing scheme funds. These activities were generally related to improving living conditions and health by altering physical, psychological, social, and cultural environments, and improving law and order.

Increased decision-making power is essential to community development. The scheme has been shown to have an important role in increasing this power by providing communities with the funding required to mount and maintain a variety of community development programs.

Improving physical environments

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme funding has also engaged participants in strategies aimed at improving the physical space of communities. These have included the maintenance of community facilities and buildings, the building, repair and maintenance of houses, the fencing of properties, and the maintenance of the aesthetic environment through the planting of plants and shrubs. It has also included the maintenance of public gardens, roads (the Ali Curung scheme was also responsible for the maintenance of the airstrip) and the collection of garbage and rubbish. In very remote out-stations, programs were established for the suppression of dust, and the building of bough shelters to provide shady

places for community meetings and play areas. Such activities in rural and remote areas are central to the maintenance of community health and wellbeing.

Improving social environments

All communities had scheme participants involved in activities aimed at improving social conditions for community members. Scheme workers were involved in the provision of childcare, outside-school-hours care and vacation care services. They were involved in the collection of firewood to be used for fuel and heating, and in providing assistance to senior citizens. This involvement assists individuals to develop a sense of community and a sense of purpose which comes from helping community members who are less fortunate and able.

The majority of rural and remote communities had established a night patrol which also used scheme funds to buy uniforms and night patrol vehicles. The night patrol initiative was set up as a pre-emptive activity to reduce the incidence of incarceration in Indigenous communities. Included in their activities are the picking-up of intoxicated individuals, lowering tension in family disputes, and providing support to individuals in trouble. Night patrols in Elliott are also a means of making sure that children are safe, and that elderly people who have come into the town are assisted home to their communities. Although there is no night patrol in Barrow Creek, there are other community initiatives which have helped to reduce Indigenous conflict with the police. Alcohol is not available to Indigenous drinkers after 3.00 pm each day and drinkers tend to make their own way home.

Ali Curung and Cherbourg also have safety houses or shelters staffed by schemes participants. Shelter for men or women whose physical and emotional safety is being threatened is provided.

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme also contributes to the improvement of health and living conditions. For example, the Julalikari-Buramana Resource Centre uses scheme resources to help communities to plant gardens and keep poultry to ensure the availability of fresh and affordable produce to the community. Dust suppression activities also help to create a healthier physical environment. Home-maker programs which provide participants with skills to help them with preparing different foods and caring for homes are also available in Ali-Curung, Elliott, and Barrow Creek.

Improving psychological environments

Participation in scheme programs provides participants with a sense of purpose, and the sense of achievement that comes from accomplishing tasks and learning new skills. Being involved in regular work or training routines, and having to fulfil work or training obligations can also improve the psychological health of participants, and provide positive role-modelling for younger generations.

For scheme participants with fewer prospects of being employed in the mainstream labour market, being involved in the scheme introduces a set of routines and obligations into their lives and can provide them with a sense of purpose. In addition, it enables them to develop the confidence to undergo further training, and to improve their 'self-image' and aspirations 'to better themselves'.

Having their own community members involved in teaching also helps to improve the respect with which Indigenous children view school, and the relevance of what is being taught. Community leaders believe that, when Indigenous Australians participate in and complete training and gain professional employment, the mainstream community's perception of Indigenous people is improved. This in turn affects the self-perception of Indigenous individuals and communities. However, there needs to be a stronger focus on developing the literacy and numeracy skills of Indigenous Australians if they are to participate in further training. This means that, if more Indigenous Australians are to be able to enter courses such as teaching or other

professions, substantial efforts need to be applied to increasing school participation and high school completion.

Contributing to socio-economic wellbeing

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme provides participants with access to regular paid work, communities with opportunities to generate income through commercial enterprises, and individuals with opportunities to acquire accredited qualifications. In these ways it plays an important role in helping rural and remote communities improve the socio-economic wellbeing of participants. Participants who acquire qualifications, licences and tickets are able to use such evidence to support applications for jobs in the external labour market or within the community where such evidence is required for the carrying-out of municipal duties. Indirectly, these activities also help to improve the wellbeing of communities.

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme plays an important role in reducing unemployment rates. This is supported from observations provided by community leaders and scheme managers participating in this study. It is also supported by statistical analyses of employment rates conducted by other researchers (Lewis 2000; Altman 2001; Hunter 2002a; Biddle 2004). However, the challenge is to ensure that the scheme does not merely become a repository for Indigenous unemployment problems. Efforts must be made to stimulate sustainable commercial ventures to provide employment.

Already a number of schemes have established a diversity of commercial enterprises. The success of such enterprises rests in part on the entrepreneurial and business skills of those who are in charge of the enterprises. Providing extra training for managers to acquire effective business development, financial and administration skills is essential if viable ventures are to be established. Providing a forum where managers and community leaders can develop collaborative networks will also make possible the sharing of information about successful and not-so-successful practices.

In the main, profits derived from commercial ventures established by the Community Development Employment Projects scheme are re-invested in the venture. However, sharing the profits of enterprises with individuals who have helped to create them should also be considered. This may help to ensure that participants are committed to the further success of the enterprise. A successful enterprise can also provide more 'top-up' hours for participants.

Challenges for the future

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme performs a major role in providing essential social services for remote communities and opportunities for participants to be involved in and acquire skills and experience in scheme-sponsored employment and training. Nevertheless its success in moving participants into full- or part-time unsubsidised employment is low. Lack of external labour markets in very remote Indigenous communities, and thin labour markets in rural towns are the major reasons for this. Another reason may be lack of suitable qualifications.

Apart from training in programs leading to tickets and licences to operate vehicles and other heavy equipment or machinery, success in engaging participants in formal training (including apprenticeships and traineeships), is also low. There are a variety of reasons for this. Training providers are sometimes reluctant to provide training for communities unless they can guarantee enough training places, and qualified tradespeople often do not move to such communities to provide necessary on-the-job supervision for apprentices. In the locations where existing training providers do not provide the relevant off-the-job programs there is a need for individuals to leave the community or town to access relevant training. These factors combine to make it more difficult for participants to undertake formal training.

Formal training leading to qualifications also requires participants to have certain basic literacy and numeracy skills. If these are lacking or deficient, then participant willingness to undertake or complete training is also diminished. Keeping in mind that, increasingly, jobs in external labour markets are going to those with relevant qualifications and experience, there is a need to emphasise the urgency for Indigenous Australians to gain the qualifications which will enable them to compete in mainstream labour markets. This means developing strategies to ensure that young people attend and successfully complete formal schooling. They can then move into training leading to vocational education and training or university qualifications. It also means providing them with appropriate infrastructure and training support, and understanding that cultural obligations may at times interrupt training.

It is clear that the value of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme lies in its flexibility. However, the scheme cannot be expected to solve the problems of Indigenous unemployment or under-employment in rural and remote regions. Major changes in the way we think about the types of economic development activities that can be implemented in the 'bush' to help to provide employment for those in rural and remote areas are essential.

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