



Unity through Enterprise

THE ARNHEMLAND PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

Owned by the Yolngu residents of Minjilang, Milingimbi, Ramingining, Galiwinku and Gapuwiyak communities NT

15/4/2005

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Aboriginal
& Torres Strait Islander Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

RECEIVED
21 APR 2005
BY: ATSIA

Submission No.	24
Date Received	21-4-05

Dear Madam Secretary,

Re: Your Correspondence Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

The Arnhemland Progress Association (ALPA) is a Financially Independent Indigenous organization owned by the indigenous members of four Arnhemland communities. Our income is derived from the successful operation of community retail stores. ALPA has successfully run its own community stores in our 5 member communities for over 33 years and has run community stores for other indigenous organizations since the early 1980s. There are currently 13 stores in the group.

ALPA is one of the largest non-government financially independent employers of Aboriginal people in Australia with nearly 200 staff across the group. Our commitment is to the continued development of indigenous employment through diversity and training. All staff in our stores besides the management team are indigenous. We currently have 1 indigenous assistant manager but there are cultural issues that make management positions within the store not particularly attractive to our staff.

We have such a high indigenous employee participation rate because we are totally committed to it and will not compromise this policy. Our indigenous staff and supervisors have pride in the fact that their store is an indigenous enterprise and they make it work. Our system also works because we are culturally sensitive and understand that cultural and family obligations are so important to the indigenous family and community Structure.

Our Chairman and Board of Directors are also indigenous people from our member communities so our members see the organization as being run by their own people. They look at our non-indigenous management as part of the ALPA family employed because of specific skills needed to successfully run the business enterprises of ALPA. They also have an expectation that we will share our skills and knowledge with Yolngu and so evolve indigenous participation in ALPA management.

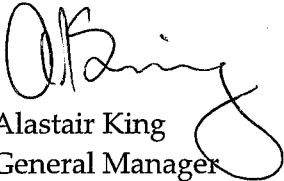
Our Store management is specifically employed to work with and train Aboriginal staff. This is made clear to them during the recruitment process before they go to work in a remote community. They are not just employed because of their skills, qualifications or experience. We believe this is why

ALPA is so successful and others are not. If a manager is not interested in working with or training Yolngu they will not make it past their probation. In contrast many others accept tradesman or other non-indigenous employees that are not interested in working with or training Yolngu or set out to fail. Even when this becomes apparent they are allowed to stay on sometimes for many years. Our managers are judged by what they can achieve at the store with Yolngu staff. If they can't work cross culturally and we mean successfully, then they cannot continue on with ALPA.

There are so many reasons why our employment model works, none of them easy and they have been developed over 33 years of trial with both success and failure. We, both balanda (non-indigenous) and Yolngu (indigenous), are very proud of what we have achieved together and outside of government.

We would be more than happy to talk in more detail with members of the committee should you be interested. In the meantime please find enclosed an ALPA video presentation, profile, hard copy PowerPoint presentation and annual report which we hope will give you more information.

Your Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alastair King', written over a white background. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Alastair King
General Manager