

# **Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory**

**An alliance of the CLC, NLC, CAALAS, NAAJA and AMSANT**

## **APO NT submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee Inquiry on the Commonwealth Indigenous Advancement Strategy Tendering Processes**

**MAY 2015**

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## Introduction

The Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory (APO NT) welcomes the invitation to provide a submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee on Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) Tendering Processes.

All of the APO NT member organisations submitted applications to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPM&C) for funding and have also assisted other Aboriginal organisations in preparing and drafting their submissions. These smaller organisations did not have the capacity and/or expertise to draft an application on this scale in the available time.

APO NT found the IAS to be a stressful and frustrating process, exacerbated by a lack of consultation and clarification from the Department on particular issues of concern. Our organisations were also frustrated with the limited information made publically available regarding the number of successful organisations that were granted funding and the breakdown of funding.

We hope that the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee inquiry will deliver recommendations to ensure a more transparent and accountable IAS funding process in future.

The primary concerns with the IAS, which APO NT will raise in this submission include the:

- lack of consultation and engagement with Aboriginal people and organisations before, during and after the implementation of the IAS,
- negative consequences of competitive tendering,
- limited time frame to provide submissions, and the
- lack of assistance from the staff at the DPM&C.

APO NT could not submit an individual application to the Department because APO NT is not an incorporated body, but auspiced by AMSANT, so APO NT applied for funding under the IAS in AMSANT's application. APO NT requested funding to continue the employment of an Aboriginal identified APO NT Policy Officer and provide Community Forums on significant issues affecting the Aboriginal community in the NT. APO NT proposed to deliver two forums a year, engaging Aboriginal representatives and organisations from across the Territory to discuss and highlight key issues on specific themes, propose possible solutions and contribute to outlining clear recommendations for the Australian and Northern Territory governments. APO NT provides a unique Aboriginal controlled mechanism for enabling Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to come together to consider issues that are affecting them. APO NT's submission was unsuccessful.

## About APO NT

The APO NT, formed in 2010, is an alliance between the Aboriginal legal services, Land Councils and Medical Services.<sup>1</sup> The alliance seeks to provide a voice for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and shares the aim of protecting and advancing the wellbeing and rights of Aboriginal people. APO NT is working to develop constructive policies on critical issues facing Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and to influence the work of the Australian and Northern Territory Government.

## List of Recommendations

### Recommendation 1:

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy was fundamentally flawed in its development and implementation. APO NT recommends the Indigenous Advancement Strategy should be reviewed based on the experiences of Aboriginal organisations and the recommendations of this submission.

### Recommendation 2:

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy was developed without adequate consultation. APO NT would like a commitment from DPM&C to ensure that future funding consultations and briefings are accessible to all organisations across the NT and that those not able to attend can still obtain relevant information and support.

### Recommendation 3:

DPM&C should hold independent roundtable discussions with Aboriginal organisations so that they can have the opportunity to provide feedback on this strategy and its processes.

### Recommendation 4:

Government Indigenous funding strategies should include an overarching theme that focuses on governance and empowerment of Aboriginal communities and regions. This area needs to be properly resourced by governments recognising that governance development work is complex and long term.

### Recommendation 5:

APO NT believes an open competitive tendering process for Aboriginal specific areas of service delivery under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy is inappropriate. Government investment should be prioritised to support and fund the further development of Aboriginal organisations

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the member organisations see [ATTACHMENT A.](#)

based on demonstrated outcomes and quality assurance in governance, management and service delivery.

**Recommendation 6:**

The government should consider adopting APO NT NGO Partnership Principles in developing tendering processes and assessing applications to ensure that applications from non-Aboriginal NGOs and other institutions developed in accordance with the Principles are given preference.

**Recommendation 7:**

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy fund should be primarily directed to Aboriginal service providers and organisations, and targets set to increase the proportion of funds to Aboriginal organisations over time.

**Recommendation 8:**

The IAS process should be redesigned to encompass a development approach which enables Indigenous input into regional priorities and funding decisions.

**Recommendation 9:**

Funding for ranger programs should be returned to the Department of Environment to ensure strong links are maintained with the natural resource management sector and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs), which are funded through the Department of Environment.

**Recommendation 10:**

That the Inquiry recommends that the DPM&C commit to providing public information on organisations that were successful and unsuccessful in the Indigenous Advancement Strategy in the current and future funding rounds, including funding allocated.

**Recommendation 11:**

The IAS tendering process should include specific timeframe requirements to make information publicly available and to respond to unsuccessful applicants requesting feedback.

**Recommendation 12:**

APO NT would like more information provided by the DPM&C on their decision-making and contract negotiation processes.

### **Limited consultation and engagement with Aboriginal people**

Whilst APO NT welcomed efforts to reduce compliance burdens on Aboriginal organisations, APO NT believes there was insufficient consultation in the lead up to the application process, and that significant input from Aboriginal people and organisations was not sought on the program design or process for applying or assessing applications.

The IAS streamlined 150 individual programs into five broad program areas: Jobs, Land and Economy; Children and Schooling; Safety and Wellbeing; Culture and Capability; and Remote Australia Strategies, which reflected the current priorities of government, rather than those of Aboriginal people. From the start, this was a top down approach. Aboriginal people, through their organisations should have been involved in the formation of these priority areas so that they would be better aligned for the advancement of Aboriginal people. To achieve success, the Government will need to engage and empower communities in strategies, policies and programs designed to address these concerns.<sup>2</sup>

APO NT agrees that ‘the government’s focus is missing the real and obvious target area regarding governance of Aboriginal communities and regions, so that they are empowered to make decisions regarding future funding. The IAS process needs to include funding to support communities and regions develop governance mechanisms that empower communities to develop solutions that are appropriate to their communities and regions.’<sup>3</sup>

APO NT also agrees that ‘the collapse of programs into the five ‘pillars’ came both without consultation and without any attempt to assist us, or any other organisation it seems, to navigate the new strategy so as to continue and build on key services we’d been streamlining for over a decade.’<sup>4</sup>

**Recommendation 1:**

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy was fundamentally flawed in its development and implementation. APO NT recommends the Indigenous Advancement Strategy should be reviewed based on the experiences of Aboriginal organisations and the recommendations of this submission.

**Recommendation 2:**

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy was developed without adequate consultation. APO NT would like a commitment from DPM&C to ensure that future funding consultations and briefings are accessible to all organisations across the NT and that those not able to attend can still obtain relevant information and support.

**Recommendation 3:**

DPM&C should hold independent roundtable discussions with Aboriginal organisations so that they can have the opportunity to provide feedback on this strategy and its processes.

**Recommendation 4:**

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<sup>2</sup> Read the Central Land Council’s submission for further argument on this issue.

<sup>3</sup> Central Land Council Submission 2015.

<sup>4</sup> North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, Commonwealth Indigenous Advancement Strategy Tendering Processes, Submission 59, p. 4.

Government Indigenous funding strategies should include an overarching theme that focuses on governance and empowerment of Aboriginal communities and regions. This area needs to be properly resourced by governments recognising that governance development work is complex and long term.

### **The negative consequences of competitive tendering**

The application process for funding, which opened on Monday 8 September, allowed for a six-week period for applications to be submitted. APO NT was concerned at the time that a six weeks application timeframe would be insufficient for Aboriginal organisations to get a grasp of the IAS and develop funding applications against an entirely new process and set of criteria. Guidance to Aboriginal organisations was limited before and during the application process.

At the time, APO NT understood that where an Aboriginal organisation may have received grant funding in the past from the Australian Government, the IAS would use a competitive tendering process that would allow not only non-government organisations (NGOs), but corporate profit entities and government entities to apply. APO NT was and is still very concerned that the tender process will result in the loss of program funding for Aboriginal organisations that had been receiving grant funding in the past for programs, (such as alcohol and the other drugs sector and youth services).

Large NGOs, private sector organisations and government entities have the resources and capacity to draw up complex tender documents at short notice and offer economies of scale that might appear superficially attractive in cost terms. However, these organisations often lack community links, cultural knowledge and long-term commitment and capacity to deliver programs to Aboriginal people and develop and retain an effective Aboriginal workforce. The considerable additional benefits of having Aboriginal organisations employing local Aboriginal people to deliver services to their communities are not necessarily factored into an open competitive tendering processes.

APO NT has noted the increased presence of mainstream NGOs in service delivery and development work in Aboriginal communities in the NT, which has contributed to the fragmentation and loss of service delivery, lack of coordination with Aboriginal organisations, lack of genuine capacity development outcomes and indeed the gradual erosion, undermining and loss of Aboriginal controlled service organisations. APO NT sought to avoid such counter-productive outcomes with the IAS funding round under its competitive tendering process, and conveyed our concerns to the Minister and departmental staff.

In particular, we highlighted APO NT's work in conjunction with key NGOs over a number of years to develop a set of Principles for mainstream NGOs that aim to foster a partnership approach focused on increasing the capacity of Aboriginal controlled organisations and service delivery. A copy of the NGO Partnership Principles can be viewed in **ATTACHMENT B** and a list of the eighteen NGOs that have endorsed the Principles can be found in **ATTACHMENT C**.

At a recent forum held in 2014, between Aboriginal NGOs and mainstream NGOs seeking to operationalise the Principles, representatives from mainstream NGOs re-confirmed their desire to work together with Aboriginal organisations and communities to promote and improve Aboriginal community control of service delivery and other initiatives. The outcomes of this forum are attached, **ATTACHMENT D and ATTACHMENT E.**

The IAS tender process was an opportunity for government and mainstream organisations to put the NGO Partnership Principles into practice. APO NT wrote to Minister Scullion on 10 September 2014 to seek the Minister's support to ensure that the tender process would result in an increase in services and programs delivered by Aboriginal organisations, employing Aboriginal people, and that Aboriginal organisations currently delivering services are not disadvantaged through the tendering process. APO NT also requested to meet with the Minister to discuss how safeguards could be put in place to ensure Aboriginal organisations weren't disadvantaged; how the cultural competence and integrity of the process will be ensured; and how the Principles could be advanced.

APO NT notes that applying an open competitive tendering process to Aboriginal specific areas of service delivery, such as Aboriginal primary health care, Aboriginal legal services and activities based on Aboriginal land, such as rangers programs, is inherently counter-productive. The Aboriginal controlled organisations delivering these services are not only best suited for doing so, but provide the priority outcomes that the Government is seeking in terms of sustainable Aboriginal employment as well as experience and engagement in governance and management, and the development of community self-reliance and responsibility. Government investment would be better placed in supporting and funding the further development of these organisations based on demonstrated outcomes and quality assurance in governance, management and service delivery.

Such an approach would allow longer term funding and a 'core services' approach, based on equity and evidence-based needs assessment, as is currently exemplified by the successful Aboriginal community controlled primary health care sector.

APO NT believes that grass roots Aboriginal organisations should always be regarded as the first priority for delivering services to Aboriginal communities.

However, where there are currently insufficient Aboriginal organisations or Aboriginal capacity to deliver specific services or programs, APO NT believes that better outcomes can be achieved through an approach that seeks to leverage government investment to develop additional Aboriginal capacity and new service delivery organisations through partnership approaches, such as outlined in relation to the APO NT NGO Partnership Principles. APO NT has demonstrated the considerable goodwill and willingness that exists amongst mainstream NGO service providers to accept and support such an approach.<sup>5</sup> What is missing is government support and commitment to ensure that its processes of investment and tendering enable and favour such outcomes.

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<sup>5</sup> See **Attachment D and E** for this evidence.



**Recommendation 5:**

APO NT believes an open competitive tendering process for Aboriginal specific areas of service delivery under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy is inappropriate. Government investment should be prioritised to support and fund the further development of Aboriginal organisations based on demonstrated outcomes and quality assurance in governance, management and service delivery.

**Recommendation 6:**

The government should consider adopting APO NT NGO Partnership Principles in developing tendering processes and assessing applications to ensure that applications from non-Aboriginal NGOs and other institutions developed in accordance with the Principles are given preference.

**Recommendation 7:**

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy fund should be primarily directed to Aboriginal service providers and organisations, and targets set to increase the proportion of funds to Aboriginal organisations over time.

## **APO NT's experience of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy**

After applications were submitted, the APO NT Secretariat sent out a short questionnaire to our member organisations. Questions included:

- Did your organisation understand the information provided in the application pack and did you require assistance from the DPM&C staff?
- If you did seek DPM&C assistance during this process, was it helpful, if not why?
- Were there any areas in the application you had difficulty with, if so what were they?
- Are there any areas in the application or process you believe the department could improve upon?

The feedback that the APO NT received is recorded below.

### **Initial consultation with Aboriginal organisations**

APO NT was unable to attend the initial briefing for the IAS, due to a workshop that was being held on the same day, that had been scheduled months in advance. APO NT requested another briefing, but was informed by DPM&C that this couldn't be provided because it would be unfair to other organisations applying, and that it was an issue of 'probity'. APO NT was not given a clear explanation of what 'probity' was and why it prevented the Department from speaking to our organisations. DPM&C also suggested that if our staff could not attend this briefing session, then perhaps it was not considered important by our members.

An Aboriginal medical health service, a member organisation of AMSANT, was called in for a brief by DPM&C a couple of weeks prior to the opening round. As a smaller organisation, they did not have the capacity, expertise or time to prepare an application and was forced to employ

consultants to undertake the bulk of the work. The CEO explained to APO NT that “It felt like the cutting of red tape was hand balled to the organisations.”

### **The application form**

The APO NT members found the application to be poorly designed, vague and we had difficulty in interpreting the criteria.

The application form did not have a question which asked “what the activity was” and a number of the questions were duplicated.

There was ambiguity in the wording of the application questions, compounded by their order, which created a significant variation as to how responses were laid out. This was clear in the process of trying to aggregate responses from different project areas, which came in very different formats (i.e., ‘targets’, ‘evidence’ of ‘outcomes’, ‘measures’ and ‘activities’ appeared in different questions and were interpreted differently from author to author).

The key performance indicators (KPI’s) were very specific, which was limiting given the broad scope of the funding. Some important project areas may have been left ‘high and dry’ and/or struggling to bridge program logic to the KPIs listed (counselling and mental health services not specific to alcohol or violence are notable examples). The lack of detail and description of the project streams made it difficult to decide where programs were best suited (e.g., Targeted Family Support Service fits with Children and Schooling, and Safety and Wellbeing – and without greater details on the logic and thought behind these programme funding streams it was hard to place the program without guessing and basing this on a small number of elements and KPIs that were listed).

The word limit and attachment limit was incompatible with the enormous variation that would exist between submissions. Word limits should take into account the number of projects and the total amount requested.

When members submitted their applications, there was no email to confirm the DPM&C received it. One CEO of an organisation said that “I called them for confirmation and the Department said the confirmation was the organisation having it recorded in their email system as being sent.”

### **DPM&C staff responding to queries and questions from members**

The APO NT members were advised to contact a central hotline if seeking any advice relating to the IAS. This was a frustrating task at times, due to the inexperience of the hotline staff.

One of APO NT’s member CEOs called the Department, to ask “how many years funding can our organisation apply for?” After speaking to four different people, the CEO received four different responses: “one person suggested one year, another told me two years, another told me three years, then I was informed that I could apply for four years.” When the same CEO asked “how do I submit a three year budget when the template they have supplied us in the application is only for one year?”, the response from the Department was to “be creative”.

Staff at the DPM&C also showed a lack of knowledge in discussing other governmental policies such as ‘Stronger Futures’, when raised in a phone conversation by one of our members.

One of the biggest concerns from APO NT members during the IAS was that the application once submitted, would not go to the relevant department that specialise in a particular area. Instead, the applications would go to a central hub and the DPM&C would assess them, which is difficult given that many different organisations around Australia will be applying for health, land, or legal services in the Northern Territory. This posed the challenge of how to write the application in a way that could be understood by the reader and appropriately assessed. It is hard to imagine an individual or even single department having the capacity to fully comprehend the academic, historical and political contexts of applications.

On the other hand, one of our members noted that a very positive aspect of this process was forcing clarity for the overarching program logic across all areas: “justification of the coexistence of programs was a very good thing especially for a large organisation, with multiple projects. We are better for having gone through this exercise.”

**Recommendation 8:**

The IAS process should be redesigned to encompass a development approach which enables Indigenous input into regional priorities and funding decisions.

## **APO NT’s application to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy**

### **The Legal Services**

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) applied for a total of \$4,478,567, which would see the delivery of four programs: Indigenous Justice Advancement Program; Indigenous Prisoner Throughcare Program; Night Patrol Community Safety Legal Education and Crime Prevention Program and the Indigenous Youth Justice Program.

NAAJA was successful in partial funding for the Indigenous Justice Advancement Program and the Night Patrol Community Safety Legal Education and Crime Prevention Program, but only to the extent of the funding that they currently received before the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, not the funding they specifically requested. This means that NAAJA will only have the capacity to deliver services to limited clients and can’t expand the service to meet clients’ demands. This will have a profound impact for NAAJA’s clients.

The Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS) applied for funding in three areas: Supplementary Legal Assistance (SLA) (\$972,525 over 3.5 years), Youth Justice Advocacy Program/ Red Cross Partnership (YJAP) (\$837,160 over 3.5 years) and a Prison Support Program (PSP) (\$3,566,691 over 3 three years).

To date CAALAS has been partially successful in one of those applications, namely the YJAP programme. The SLA funds have been secured for services in Central Australia and discussions with CAALAS are ongoing. The application for the PSP funds was unsuccessful.

CAALAS is concerned that the funds granted under the YJAP programme bear no resemblance to the funds sought and do not allow for the programme to be delivered in the way it was designed. The amount granted seems to be an arbitrary one with no explanation of how the department envisages a revised programme will operate.

CAALAS is also concerned about the manner in which the outcome of the applications was communicated. They received a letter announcing that they had been successful in their application but in fact the outcome was quite devastating in the first instance. CAALAS has had some success in negotiating the funding for the YJAP but the final amount is still significantly below what was applied for and will not allow them to deliver the programme in an optimal way.

The successful PSP program, which has strong support including from the Commissioner of Corrections, ceased at the end of June 2014 due to a lack of finance. From 2010, this was a very valuable program that assisted prisoners with parole application matters and helped parolees to prepare for release and to deal with difficult issues that they often face once released. Such a service is provided for prisoners in the Top End of the Northern Territory, but Central Australia, despite a clear need, currently has no equivalent. The funding request was not successful under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

CAALAS will have no funding to provide advice and casework support for prisoners eligible for parole in Central Australia, which means many prisoners won't receive the reintegration support they need. Should we not obtain SLA (Stronger Futures) funding through a different funding stream, CAALAS' service will be crippled. Access to justice for Aboriginal people in Central Australia would be severely compromised.

### **The Central Land Council**

The Central Land Council has already provided a submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee. This section draws on the Central Land Council's submission.

The Central Land Council submitted an application totalling \$29,253,389 to deliver six projects:

1. Ranger Program:
  - Funding for 4 ranger programs: Santa Teresa, Daguragu, Harts Range and Angas Downs
  - Funding for individualised workplace support for 120 rangers, including LLN training
  - Ranger infrastructure and capital, including co-ordinator accommodation
  - Expansion program to expand ranger groups to communities that have requested.
2. Enterprise and partnership development to employ an Enterprise Development Facilitator
3. Feral animal management – development of local and regional management strategies
4. Repatriation and archival of cultural materials
5. Support for ceremonial and funeral arrangements

6. Support for Indigenous landowners in the management of pastoral enterprises (Tanami Downs Station, Huckitta Station, Bluebush Station, Mistake Creek Station and Alcoota Station).<sup>6</sup>

CLC's application included \$7,445,446 from other funding sources and \$2,230,500 in-kind contribution towards the projects. One part of the submission was to continue and enhance the outcomes of the successful Indigenous Ranger Groups operating across Central Australia and allow expansion of the program. The Ranger program supports economic participation in remote communities in cultural and natural resource management and is a proven model of success.

The CLC sought funding for 4 ranger groups from IAS, but was only successful in funding one ranger program – the Angas Downs Ranger Program. Subsequent funding is being sought for the other 3 groups through the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) *Real Jobs Program*. DPM&C awarded the CLC \$1.675 million to carry out this program for three years for the Angus Downs Ranger Program.<sup>7</sup> This was the only successful project in the CLC's IAS application.

The CLC is disappointed with the decisions on the CLC projects related to expansion and development of the Ranger Program. CLC has worked hard over the years on the ranger program, which has shown very clear employment, social and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal men and women in communities. The CLC provides culturally respectful management and governance structures which mean that traditional owners influence the work of rangers. This knowledge combined with natural resource management expertise is improving ecosystems right across the Central Australia and creating meaningful and valued employment for Aboriginal people in remote communities.

The CLC is also disappointed by the lack of support for the repatriation and archival of cultural materials project and for a position of Enterprise Development Facilitator. The CLC is concerned that while 'culture and capability' is a priority under the IAS, that there was a scarce number of projects funded under this priority in this round of funding. The government's rejection of the Enterprise Development Facilitator position sends a message to Aboriginal people that the government is unwilling to fund the support needed to develop Aboriginal enterprises in Australia.<sup>8</sup>

### AMSANT

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory (AMSANT) is the peak advocacy body for 26 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in the NT. Since 1994, AMSANT has played a major role in supporting Aboriginal people to control their own health services. Through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, AMSANT applied for a total of \$4,279,189 to deliver three programs over three years. AMSANT's application was to provide three existing services at AMSANT, but would ultimately be new funding through DPM&C.

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<sup>6</sup> To view the CLC Funding table, please view the Central Land Council's Submission.

<sup>7</sup> For a break down to view what the Central Land Council requested and received from DPM&C please read the Central Land Council submission to the Senate Inquiry into the IAS tendering Process.

<sup>8</sup> For further discussion, please refer to the Central Land Council's submission to the Committee.

The AMSANT Aboriginal Leadership Project targeted emerging leaders and future potential leaders from amongst the staff and Board members of Aboriginal community-controlled health services (ACCHS) in the Northern Territory and their partner organisations. Whilst there are a limited number of Indigenous leadership programmes across Australia, there are no programs that specifically target the ACCHS sector. The AMSANT Business Improvement Project aimed to assist Aboriginal community-controlled health services (ACCHS) in the Northern Territory to improve their governance, management and administration capability. AMSANT has a clear understanding of the needs of the ACCHS sector through its day to day operations and would address the gaps by providing a comprehensive assessment of organisational needs and then deliver support or broker the support services if required. AMSANT also applied for funding for APO NT, as mentioned in the introduction of this submission. AMSANT was unsuccessful in its funding application for all three projects.

**Recommendation 9:**

Funding for ranger programs should be returned to the Department of Environment to ensure strong links are maintained with the natural resource management sector and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs), which are funded through the Department of Environment.

**Post-submission to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy**

After applications were submitted, there seemed to be a vacuum of communication from the DPM&C. APO NT made a number of calls to the Department, as did our members, but there was limited information available from DPM&C. APO NT also asked when and where there would be a posting of successful organisations and whether this information would be categorised according to jurisdiction, type of organisation (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) and what service they would deliver. APO NT was informed that we would have to wait until all contracts had been signed. Even then, we were given no assurance whether this information would be made publically available. APO NT would like this Senate Inquiry to assist APO NT and other Aboriginal organisations understand the IAS, especially where the money has gone and to which organisations.

When the APO NT members were contacted in regards to their applications, some of the information was misleading. The correspondence that CAALAS received, for example, indicated that the organisation had been successful across all programs they had applied for, and this was not the case.

The characterisation of CAALAS as a successful applicant was also misleading, and the amount of funding that CAALAS received bore no resemblance to the programme for which the organisation applied.

After mounting pressure from organisations and media, a list was released of organisations that had been successful. The APO NT organisations have noted that there are a number of

successful non-Aboriginal organisations on this list and there is no further information detailing which organisations they will be working in partnership with or to what extent. This is problematic, given that some organisations may not have an existing relationship with the Aboriginal communities where they intend on working. Realising this, APO NT suggests that the APO NT NGO Partnership Principles be adopted by DPM&C when assessing applications. APO NT is disappointed that there is insufficient information to assess the Minister's assurance that funding will be preferentially allocated to Aboriginal organisations. Accounts from Aboriginal organisations in the NT suggest cuts to funding rather than any increase.

There has been no advice provided by DPM&C on the decision making process, such as who made the preliminary and final recommendations and decisions and against which criteria the applications were assessed and rated. This has been an issue of concern for all of our members. APO NT would like answers as to why our organisations were either successful or not successful. APO NT would also like more information on the process on how decisions are made and this should be provided to all organisations prior to any future funding strategies.

**Recommendation 10:**

That the Inquiry recommends that the DPM&C commit to providing public information on organisations that were successful and unsuccessful in the Indigenous Advancement Strategy in the current and future funding rounds, including funding allocated.

**Recommendation 11:**

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy tendering process should include specific timeframe requirements to make information publicly available and to respond to unsuccessful applicants requesting feedback.

**Recommendation 12:**

APO NT would like more information provided by the DPM&C on their decision-making and contract negotiation processes.