



13th April, 2015

Ms L Beverley
Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committees
On Finance and Public Administration,
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Dear Ms Beverley,

I refer to the recent decision relating to the allocation of funding under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy; Malabam Health Board Aboriginal Corporation was offered \$208k over three years to be involved in a Children and Schooling Programme.

Our application for IAS funding focussed on Youth Service delivery as we have been receiving approximately \$400k per year from FaCHSIA over the past five years for these services to be provided; we believed that we had a cogent case for continuation of funding for these services. It also needs to be noted that the Commonwealth government contributed \$1.5M in 2009 towards the purpose built youth centre in Maningrida. The population of Maningrida is approximately 3,500, it is the second largest Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory and 65% of the population comprises young people under the age of 25 years.

The IAS funding round had no provision specifically for youth service delivery and we believe that the credence of our application was compromised because of this deficiency. Malabam Health Board provides employment to seven Aboriginal staff who are involved in providing the following youth services:

- After school daily drop in centre for kids, on average 75 youth attend on a daily basis
- Provision of Youth Diversion program which focusses on restorative justice to keep youth out of going to jail
- Weekly Mooditj program for disengaged youth that focusses on sexual health, safe sex and life skills
- Provision of weekly back to country bush trips where disengaged youth learn about culture from community elders
- Weekly community film nights
- Counselling of young people
- Provision of healthy living and nutrition classes
- Respite for kids every second weekend when alcohol is available in the community
- School holiday programs

The youth program has also has a positive impact on kids not roaming the streets of a night time; another important aspect is that there have been no youth suicides in the community over the past three years which can be attributed to the excellent support services provided to youth through our program; It is also acknowledged that our youth program has assisted in reducing the youth crime rate.

The Board of Directors have chosen to decline the \$208k over three years that is linked to the IAS Children and Schooling program as it has little relevance to the core business of our Youth Services program.

Despite a number of requests to the Prime Ministers Department, there has been no communication to us as to the reason for the cessation of funding to our Youth program.

I ask that you review the decision made in relation to the funding so that our invaluable youth service can continue. The Board of Directors invites your representatives to visit Maningrida to meet with community members to hear about our youth program and to discuss the importance and relevance that our program has on the wellbeing of young people in the community.

At this stage, with the cessation of funding, the youth centre will be closing its doors on 30th June, 2015; youth wellbeing will be compromised and seven committed Aboriginal staff will lose gainful employment in the community; this is a scenario that we do not want to transpire. We respectfully seek the support of the Finance and Public Administration Committee in assisting to reverse what we consider to be a deplorable act of misjudgement by the current government in relation to scuppering a proven and well supported Youth Program here in Maningrida.

Yours incerely

Ray Matthews
Chief Executive Officer