



**Aarnja**<sup>Ltd</sup>

*The Regional Body for Kimberley Aboriginal people...*

## **Aarnja Ltd submission to**

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit Inquiry into

**Commonwealth Grants Administration - Inquiry based on Auditor-General's reports 35 (2016-17) - Indigenous Advancement Strategy**

### **Submitter details :**

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## **SUBMISSION BODY:**

Aarnja Ltd has witnessed the devastating effects of the flawed design and rollout of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy on remote aboriginal communities in the Kimberley region of Northern Western Australia.

The failure of public policy during the period of the IAS program rollout, has and will leave an enduring legacy, which has targeted and added further layers of disadvantage to the most disadvantaged group of Australians, remote dwelling aboriginal families & individuals.

Aarnja attributes the IAS flaws to the lack of consultation with the policy focus group indigenous people and the 2013 machinery of Government changes which was not communicated to the Indigenous sector.

Machinery of Government processes, specifically procurement and rationalization in Aarnja view is the reason that Indigenous corporations failed to submit IAS applications, as many aboriginal community organisations were defunded, and subsequently did not have staff or an administration that would have been aware of the process.

IAS Consultation consisted of a procurement briefing, in the major population centres of the Kimberley.

The Commonwealth Government IAS Policy has had a unintended consequence, of setting an agenda for the Western Australian State Government to take a extreme aboriginal Affairs approach of "closing Remote Aboriginal Communities" which has progressed to "not providing state municipal services to Remote Aboriginal Communities" in the Kimberley, which has the same outcome as "closing remote Aboriginal Communities", a simple play on words.

The rollout of the IAS has disempowered local aboriginal communities, through the IAS procurement of eastern states based not for profits, to deliver services to Kimberley aboriginal communities.

Aarnja acknowledges that the timeframe available to Dept Prime Minister & Cabinet to develop & rollout the IAS policy and program, was woefully inadequate, and highlights the disconnect between Government and the focus group-indigenous Australians, As per usual no consideration was accorded to the outcome for the indigenous community, of a flawed Policy & program implementation.

Aarnja Ltd hopes that Government learns from this experience, and whilst the ANAO Audit of the Indigenous Affairs Strategy program highlights the systemic failures or shortcomings of regulatory and administrative process, minimal regard is paid to the devastating effects for indigenous people (the intended recipients).

Whilst the focus of the Auditor Generals report No 35 (2016-2017), the subject of this inquiry,

Aarnja points to a consistent and enduring government indigenous affairs approach, of frequent policy and program change, which does not allow for sustainable development in redressing endemic issues peculiar to indigenous people & communities.

The government indigenous affairs approach outlined above extends over a thirty year period and is a Key factor in failing to close the gap.

Aarnja recognises that the Auditor Generals report inquiry covers the period 2014 – 2016 however, the 2016 Closing the Gap report delivered to Parliament in February 2017 is evidence of the Failure of the IAS program in meeting or progressing incrementally the IAS program objectives of improve results for Indigenous Australians, with a particular focus on

the Government's priorities of ensuring children go to school, adults work, Indigenous business is fostered, the ordinary rule of law is observed in Indigenous communities as in other Australian communities, and Indigenous culture is supported. In addition to these policy outcomes, the Strategy is intended to:

reduce program duplication and fragmentation, reduce delivery costs and more clearly link activity to outcomes;

ensure communities have the key role in designing and delivering local solutions to local problems; and

offer a simplified approach to funding that reduces the red tape burden on communities and providers.

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