

Friday 5th March 2015

Uncertainty and confusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations with Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding round

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights advocacy organisation ANTaR today called for greater transparency, clarity and engagement in the approach to funding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, programs and organisations.

Following the announcement of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) grant round on Wednesday, National Director Andrew Meehan said it was clear that the tendering process for the IAS has caused great uncertainty and continues to do so.

Mr Meehan said "There is great confusion as to who has been funded to deliver what range of services, and in which areas across the country."

"There's even confusion among organisations that have been funded as to which projects in their tender they're being funded for, and for how long," he said.

Mr Meehan said that the IAS tendering process has been opaque and unclear from the start, and has caused great upheaval and anxiety for many services.

"The problem is that there has been minimal engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives as to how this might work," Mr Meehan said.

"Moving to a widespread tendering process where everything is up for grabs, alongside the \$534 million in cuts in last years budget, has been a great disruption to the provision of services to those most in need," he said.

"Government needs to sit down with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and work through a better approach," he said.

He said that while it was difficult to get a clear picture of what has been funded, reports are starting to emerge that some vital organisations have not.

"It's unacceptable that the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and parts of that sector do not appear to have been funded given the incarceration crisis the nation is facing," he said.

While welcoming reports of funding Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Mr Meehan said there were more questions than answers with the announcement of the grants round.

These include:

- How would needs be met in communities where organisations were not funded?
- What is the scope, range, and coverage of service provision funded?
- How will government account for those services that did not get their applications in in time, or due to capacity or other reasons did not apply?

- How is the approach dealing with the 1230 'non-compliant' applications?
- When will the next round occur?

Mr Meehan said that he understood that there had been more than 2,400 applications put in for nearly 5,000 projects worth \$14 billion. The total funding allocated to the IAS through to 2018 was \$2.3 billion. Of the applications put in, he understands that nearly half (1233) were deemed 'non-compliant', and of those funded, some services appeared to be receiving three years of funding, and others one year.

ANTaR is the only non-Indigenous organisation dedicated solely to supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and working to educate the wider community, shape public opinion, and speak up for justice, rights and respect for Australia's First Peoples.