

Senate Estimates 8 April 2022

National Indigenous Australians Agency, CEO, Ms Jody Broun

Opening Statement

Good morning Chair and Senators.

Wanthiwa

[For Hansard: Yindjibarndi for hello]

I wish to begin by acknowledging the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, who are the traditional custodians of the Canberra area, and pay my respect to the Elders, past, present and emerging.

I would also like to extend my respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Senators and witnesses appearing today.

Chair, thank you for the opportunity to make a brief opening statement.

The 2022–23 Budget has provided the National Indigenous Australians Agency additional resources, both Administered and Departmental funding, to expand the scope of what we are able to deliver to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

NIAA is set to receive \$1.9 billion next financial year, consisting of \$1.65 billion in Administered funding and \$325.6 million in Departmental operating costs.

We have also seen an increase in our staffing level, up 26.5 positions, bringing us to a total of 1,270 staff.

I would like to take a few moments now to quickly update the Committee on some of our major accomplishments since our last appearance.

On 1 March, we opened the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, a significant step in the healing journey for Stolen Generations survivors from the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and Jervis Bay.

In the first month, we received more than 200 applications and the team is working diligently through those to deliver the first payments in the very near future. We will continue to assess claims as quickly as possible and, guided by our External Advisory Board, will do so in a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive manner.

On 24 March, we were also pleased to support the finalisation of six Aboriginal land claims across the Northern Territory, including nearly half of the Kakadu National Park.

Handover ceremonies to Traditional Owners marked the end of a very long process and we will continue to work with these communities as they embark on the developments and economic empowerment they wish to see in their communities.

Also since our last appearance, the Government has:

- announced the outcomes of the Indigenous Land Enterprise Infrastructure Fund and the Food Security Grant Opportunity,
- appointed the Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network to establish an Indigenous Business and Employment Hub in the top end,
- established the interim board of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation (NTAIC), and
- opened the architectural design competition for Ngurra, which is a big step towards making that project a reality.

We have initiated conversations with state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association to secure their support for Local & Regional Voice arrangements, which signals the start of the implementation stage.

This work will be supported by the Local & Regional Voice Establishment Group which will assist governments and focus on overarching issues relevant across all jurisdictions and regions.

Community-led design remains at the centre of this process and once regions are determined, local people will be supported by governments to design their own Local & Regional Voice.

And over the couple of months we have placed a strong focus on flood affected Indigenous communities across the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales and in Southern Queensland, providing what direct support we can and assistance to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with mainstream services and recovery supports.

We have continued to offer our coordinating support for Indigenous portfolio bodies including facilitating the processes to appoint a new Registrar for Indigenous Corporations, Chief Executive Officer for the Torres Strait Regional Authority, and a number of Board appointments to Indigenous Business Australia, the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, Outback Stores and, the new Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation.

And looking internally, we launched our Reconciliation Action Plan 2022–2025 and we were proud to have our work recognised through two nominations in the *Institute of Public Administration 2021 Spirit of the Service Awards*, for the conduct of the Indigenous Voice co-design process and our continuous cultural learning and development program called Footprints.

I thank the Committee and welcome your questions.