

**Supplementary Budget Estimates Opening Statement – 8 November 2024**

**National Indigenous Australians Agency, CEO, Jody Broun**

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Good morning Chair and Senators

Wanthiwa [For Hansard: Yindjibarndi for hello]

I wish to begin by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on and acknowledge the Ngambri people and other families with connection to the lands of the ACT and surrounding region.

I extend that respect to Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and to First Nations Senators and witnesses appearing here today.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency has continued to work with and listen to communities and the Coalition of Peaks, and with our state and territory counterparts, to improve Closing the Gap outcomes. I would like to highlight just a few areas of progress since our last Estimates appearance in June.

- On 1 July 2024, the Youpla Support Program commenced, providing a resolution for people impacted by the collapse of the insurance provider, Youpla Group. The program is expected to help more than 13,000 people — as at 30 September 2024, \$28.8 million had been paid to 5,428 former members and beneficiaries.
- Development of the Remote Jobs and Economic Development program is well progressed, following its design in partnership with remote communities and key stakeholders.

- We have been working with the community in Central Australia to prepare for the summer period, focusing on the wellbeing and safety of young First Nations people and delivering \$3.2 million for school holiday activities over the next 2 years.
- We continue to work with Commonwealth agencies, jurisdictions and First Nations communities to prepare for the upcoming extreme weather season, including a focus on improving food security in remote communities.
- Last month the Government announced \$43.2 million to extend the Indigenous Boarding Providers Grants Program to the end of 2026, supporting around 2,500 students. This is additional to the \$18 million investment to upgrade or build facilities, which has been offered in 3 Alice Springs schools through the Central Australia Boarding Response Fund.
- The Government also recently announced an expansion of the Indigenous Rangers Program, with an investment of \$355 million over 4 years to create over 1,000 new Indigenous Ranger jobs.
- Through the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, we have issued payments to a further 85 applicants and delivered an additional 12 Personal Acknowledgments (as at 1 October 2024), bringing the total applicants paid under the Scheme to 978 (\$79.4 million) and 55 Personal Acknowledgments.

I've just come back from WA and have been fortunate to travel to the Kimberley to see the great work of communities and NIAA funded providers who are delivering and driving really positive outcomes.

- In Derby, I visited a hostel that is achieving incredible results. 34 Aboriginal children are residing at the hostel with school attendance rates of 90 – 100% and 17 local Aboriginal staff members are employed at the hostel. It was great to hear from staff how well students are performing since opening as a Youth Hostel in February this year.

### **Economic empowerment**

The Prime Minister announced a focus on economic empowerment at the Garma Festival in August this year. First Nations economic empowerment is fundamental to all areas of social policy and is more important than ever. As Australia faces up to generational economic transformations like the net-zero future, it is essential First Nations people have a seat at the table on matters that affect them, their families, their communities and their Country.

First Nations peoples are partners in this future and the NIAA is working hard to make this partnership an equitable one.

The Treasury, with support from the NIAA, is working with the Coalition of Peaks to scope a First Nations Economic Partnership (announced by the Prime Minister at Garma) which will be an important mechanism for shared decision-making with First Nations peoples.

### **Gender-based violence and missing and murdered women**

I would like to acknowledge the women who have lost their lives to domestic and family violence this year and since we last met in this Committee. It remains unacceptable that First Nations women experience disproportionately high levels of family and domestic violence.

On 6 September, National Cabinet announced a \$3.9 billion investment in the National Access to Justice Partnership including an uplift of \$800 million for

legal services responding to gender-based violence for First Nations women and children. This decision provides much needed funding certainty, and addresses pay parity and indexation issues for organisations providing vital services to women and their families.

The funding will help address issues raised in the Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children. The NIAA is working across government to support the careful consideration of the findings and recommendations from the Inquiry.

### **Looking ahead**

The NIAA is working hard to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard, recognised and empowered. We will continue to work in partnership to ensure our policies and programs align with the needs and aspirations of First Nations communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee. We welcome your questions.