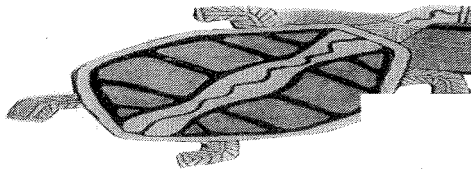


Submission No. 52

Date Received



**YORTA YORTA NATION  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION**

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7 August 2008

Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: [atsia.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:atsia.reps@aph.gov.au)

RECEIVED  
08 AUG 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

BY: ...ATSIA.....

**INQUIRY INTO DEVELOPING INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISES**

Thank you for providing Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC), with the opportunity to make a submission on the Inquiry Into Developing Indigenous Enterprises.

**Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation**

The name of the Association is Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, reflecting the Yorta Yorta language spoken by all the Yorta Yorta clans, including the Kailtheban, Wollithiga, Moira, Ulupna, Bangerang, Kwat Kwat, Yalaba Yalaba and Ngurai-illiam-wurrung clans. The Yorta Yorta Nation is comprised of peoples with undeniable bloodlines to the Original Ancestors of the Land of the Yorta Yorta Nation. These bloodlines link Yorta Yorta peoples' past, present and future to one another, with traditional laws, customs, beliefs and sovereignty intact.

We welcome the recent commitment to closing the gap from the Federal government. and the introduction of the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Reports which assists in monitoring and measuring key indicators in Indigenous social and economic well-being from a whole-of-government perspective.

We have chosen to comment on the terms of reference drawing on the Yorta Yorta Nations through - our Governing Committee and staff.

## Terms of reference

### **1. Whether the current government, industry and community programs offering specific enterprises support programs and services of Indigenous enterprises are effective, particularly in building sustainable relationships with the broader sector.**

Our response to this in parts is a short is no not in the current context of enterprise development and building sustainable relationships at the local level. We believe that a strong acknowledgement of Aboriginal peoples' economic history has translated into pockets of asset rich (people, land and buildings) versus liquid poor (no ongoing funding or budget increases).

In 2000 YYN went to various Victorian and Australian Government agencies in relation to their cultural aspirations within an entrepreneurial approach we were met with interest, meetings and referrals. For instance, YYN experiences we have a number of issues that are evolving through Australian and State government policies that are impacting on local new reforms to welfare

We acknowledge the significant relationship with Parks Victoria (PV), and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE).

YYN have some reservations around sustainable partnerships with the Victorian Government a report released by *Victorian Auditor General (June 2008), Coordinating Services and Initiatives for Aboriginal People*, in discussing the Victorian Government's joined up approach - widely know as the Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework (VIAF) - noted in its Executive Summary on the VIAF specifically:

'The lack of coordinated program design is a key area for attention. Also the associated governance arrangements are not robust, rather,

- They are complex
- Timeframes are uncertain
- Respective roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved are unclear and inadequately documented
- Deliberate effort to identify joined up risks, and strategies to mitigate them, is not evident.' (p3)

***' Creating our own economic base with employment and training and to be at last acknowledged and recognised as people in our own right '***

*Yorta Yorta Council of Elders Meeting 2004*

We understand clearly that the Australian Government is focused on supporting the achievement of Indigenous economic independence through increasing employment, self employment, and asset and wealth management.

Yet at conceptual stages potential small / micro business operators are of what is available and who they are able to access this from. A large majority of our community members are unemployed and the implementation of national policy changes has hindered and reduced their opportunities to develop a business concept.

YYN noted in our business planning process operational concerns for business development in the following areas:

#### POLICY/PROGRAMS

- Assistance - business development assistance - from concept to structure.
- The government reintroduce FARMBS and extend the scope of professional advice and planning grants with online options.
- Enable communities that are disadvantaged (due to lack of human capital and skills) to access federal government programs specifically to access a range of skilled support and services.
- Reinvest in a community infrastructure program (like Regional Partnerships) with a transparent process.
- Less 'red tape' - in the Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), application process and a shorter timeframe on the application process.
- Increase the number of Small Business Field Officers to rural areas to assist development of micro and small businesses, management of statutory and legal requirements and training

#### EDUCATION/TRAINING

- the development of culturally sensitive, financial literacy courses,
- Recognition of the importance and funding for coaching, mentoring, tutors and shadowing to ensure skills are implemented
- Local mentors for small business – access to a range of local mentors for specific areas of the business planning.
- All training models are underpinned by a Code of Conduct and ethics that maintains a set of standards for valuing cultural difference and diversity.
- Development and implementation of Natural Resource Management in context of addressing social justice issues and reconciliation.
- The government streamline employment paperwork to reduce the impact on small and micro business and consistency and accuracy of information supplied by providers.

#### TECHNOLOGY

- Develop a holistic telecommunications package for all Australians, using digital technology to deliver equitable, affordable and reliable access to broadband, mobile and landline, to enable safety, business, community sustainability.

- The Communication package should also invest in maintenance and technical support to enable users to use the new technology.

## **2. Identifying areas of Indigenous commercial advantage and strength.**

YYN identified through our business plan process the following areas of business as:

Dharnya Centre – education and training  
 Yenbena Education Centre  
 Yeilma Farm  
 Business incubator – local family Clans to develop business acumen.  
 Land and Water Management

***For example Business Incubator.***

***Operational approach through the family groups and cited resources to investigate educational/economic workshops. Family businesses are developed and supported towards self sufficiency.***

We acknowledge that the Australian Government is focused on supporting the achievement of Indigenous economic independence through increasing employment, self employment, and asset and wealth management. The YYN 's biggest frustration is in the area of converting 'dialogue into commitment' to grow our local financial resource. The development stages for potential small / micro business operators are unclear as to what is available and where is this accessible.

## **3. The feasibility of adapting the US Minority Business Development Council model to the Australian context;**

Yorta Yorta Nations are supportive of the development of a Minority Business Development Council in an Australian context that embraces the United Nations instruments as part of their management tender or contractual outsourcing.

Any MBDC framework should embrace Indigenous cultural protocols, ethics, and knowledge systems and be specific about the processes involved

There is a history of large companies undertaking work as part of their triple bottom line policies/programs with local communities. The challenges will arise with implementing, progressing and sustaining partnerships, particularly at the level of whole of government-whole of community, it is a difficult task.

## **4. Whether incentives should be provided to encourage successful businesses to sub contract, do business with or mentor new Indigenous enterprises.**

At the Indigenous community level incentives need to be in place to encourage successful business to engage with Indigenous people. By providing an additional clause that provides for incentive for engagement and partnership opportunities with Indigenous enterprises is commendable.

Our question is who will be the appropriate conduit between the businesses and Indigenous enterprises? What incentives and safeguards can be put in place to make sure contractual incentives are being met by sun contractor/businesses? What incentives and safeguards are to be put in place for Indigenous businesses?

In many cases, it is questionable as to the benefits from those arrangements to individuals and communities, and there is an immediate need to foster Indigenous based enterprises, particularly in an environment where the health and socio-economic outcomes are so poor.

We have developed partnerships with PV, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) and the DSE resulting in mixed outcomes on the long road to economic sustainability.

### *Yorta Yorta Nation – Partnership story*

*Dharnya Centre - A great cooperative initiative between Indigenous people and government in Barmah, Despite 20 years of proven success in this joint Yorta Yorta Nation (YYN) – Parks Victoria (PV) enterprise, the Dharnya centre is deteriorating almost beyond repair due to a lack of resources.*

*Built in 1985 by Yorta Yorta hands, the Dharnya Centre has been a centre of learning and cultural exchange in the Barmah forest. Displays combine Yorta Yorta cultural knowledge with western science, and accommodation facilities have been used by hundreds of university and school groups. The centre is also the only PV information centre in the park where visitors can get advice on track conditions, recreational activities, and so on. With the accommodation building now closed due to dilapidation, and the displays fading with age, Dharnya is struggling to fulfil these purposes. A business plan was developed by YYN and PV in 2003, and reworked in 2004. As well as urgent renovation funds, the plans include value-adding proposal for a new conference centre with a commercial kitchen that would also be used by hospitality courses in the nearby Yorta Yorta run Yenbena Indigenous Training Centre. Now, after two years of planning, there is still no money and no improvement ‘*

*Dharnya Centre gong down the drain’ Johnathon La Nauve 2005*

In the Yorta Yorta Nations experience, unless the human resource is made available to broker and provide direct practical support, including for the preparation of tenders and business information, many Indigenous enterprises fail or end-up being absorbed or lost to larger and more adequately resourced companies.

The Yorta Yorta Nations trusts that this information will be of assistance with the Inquiry, if you require any additional information I can be contacted on 03 58 6933 53.

Yours sincerely,

Neville Atkinson  
Chairperson