



SUBMISSION FROM LEEDAL PTY LTD TO THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON REMOTE INDIGENEOUS COMMUNITIES

We welcome this opportunity to make a written submission to the Senate select committee on remote Indigenous communities.

Leedal is the biggest employer in Fitzroy Crossing and is owned by six Indigenous communities in the Valley. We are well placed to comment on the employment and enterprise opportunities available in Fitzroy Crossing.

At present the employment and enterprise opportunities for young Indigenous people in Fitzroy Crossing are limited. Leedal has made ongoing efforts to increase the number of Indigenous employees but cultural and social issues, combined with a lack of effective government action and flexibility in training programs, has resulted in limited success. There is a strong need for mentoring of young trainees and employees and many come from dysfunctional families and find it difficult to work.

In an attempt to fill this gap and return benefits to our communities, Leedal is investigating opportunities for the training of housing maintenance and construction workers in Fitzroy Crossing. Mentoring and safe accommodation is a critically-important ingredient for successful traineeships.

Training

Leedal will soon begin discussions with potential partners for training and employment opportunities that can be created for people in the Valley. The Department of Indigenous Affairs and Department of Housing have been supportive of the development of local initiatives.

The aim of Leedal is to provide the young people of Fitzroy Crossing with the option of training and career paths and a future independent of welfare and a reliance on alcohol. Prohibition is not a solution to existing alcohol-related and other social problems – it merely masks the underlying problems and moves it on. Providing a future for Aboriginal people which is independent of welfare is critical to addressing these social issues. It has already been well established by evidence already given to the committee that more well-targeted government support services are needed.

Community

Leedal is in the process of rebuilding the Tarunda supermarket which was completely destroyed in a fire in July. The fire brought home the vital importance of the Fitzroy local supermarket to the communities of the Valley. Tarunda is wholly-owned by Indigenous communities and provides staple food at subsidised prices and a range of other goods. The post office, with ATM facilities, the video store and take-away shop were also burnt down in the fire.

Leedal is working with insurance company QBE to rebuild a new supermarket which will cater for the needs of Fitzroy residents well into the future. The Derby-West Kimberley Shire has assisted the community and the company by allowing Leedal to lease the council-owned recreation centre until the supermarket is built. The expected timeframe is 12 months. Leedal will continue to consult with key stakeholders to ensure the development of a revitalized Fitzroy shopping district has all of the facilities required by our community.

Leedal is also investing in communities with the establishment of the Yapawarnti (which means "lots of children" in Walmajarri language) Foundation which will direct funding towards the provision of recreational, educational and entertainment opportunities for the children of Fitzroy.

CDEP

Leedal chairman Patrick Green is also a director of the Marra Worra Worra Resource Agency and lives in the Junjuwa community.

He is concerned about the Commonwealth's withdrawal of CDEP funding for Fitzroy residents over recent years.

CDEP participants were being paid to carry out municipal services, such as rubbish collection and assistance to the elderly. Since the withdrawal of CDEP funding, no agency has picked up responsibility for the delivery of these services in Fitzroy communities. It makes sense to employ people in their own communities to look after their own communities and the people in it. This situation needs to be reviewed and CDEP support reinstated.

Governance

Leedal has invested in providing its directors, who are all members of the communities they represent, with governance and directorship training.

With the support of Indigenous Business Australia, Leedal has provided training to its directors related to the reading of balance sheets and understanding financial statements. The training was designed for by IBA for Indigenous directors.

Governance, leadership, and administrative training for leading members of Indigenous communities in Fitzroy is completely lacking. This is required in order for community councils to be firstly, existent and secondly, effective. If Aboriginal people are to be empowered, assistance with the provision of these important skills is necessary. Leedal

has had the opportunity to raise this issue with the Department of Indigenous Affairs and welcomes developments in this area.

Cooperation

Leedal also welcomes the opportunities for Fitzroy Crossing that present with the recently proposed COAG remote area service priority location status. The partnership between the State and Federal Governments is expected to result in new housing for our communities and better coordinated and targeted service delivery.

In order for this to be successful, more than lip service needs to be paid to the concept of engagement and empowerment. Real opportunities need to be provided by partnerships being made with locally and Indigenous-owned companies such as Leedal rather than large out of town corporates with existing workforces including some Indigenous people who are brought in and then leave again. When they finish, no real jobs or additional skills capacity have been left behind in the communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to your inquiry.

Leedal chairman

Patrick Green

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