



Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation
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PY Ku Network

Background Brief

February 2009

Background / history

Council of Australian Governments Indigenous Trials

In November 2000 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed on a reconciliation framework to address indigenous disadvantage and in April 2002 COAG agreed to the commencement of the National Indigenous Trials. Eight communities / regions across Australia were targeted to trial a whole-of-government approach to seeking to improve relationships between government and aboriginal communities to deliver more effective responses to the needs of Aboriginal Australians.

It was subsequently announced that the APY Lands were to be the targeted region in South Australia and the (Australian Government) Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) was to be the “lead” government agency with Anangu Pitjantjatjara (APY Land Council) representing the interests of Anangu.

The APY Lands COAG Steering Committee was formed, with representation from the Australian and South Australian Governments and the APY Land Council. Responsibility for COAG Trial initiatives and all subsequent whole-of-government work has since been assumed by the Tjungungku Kuranyukutu Palyantjaku (TKP) Regional Forum, formed at the invitation of Anangu in February 2005.

In early 2003 the Department of Health and Ageing funded the APY Land Council to engage a consultant to develop a business case and funding submission for the establishment of a Rural Transaction Centre (RTC). The consultancy commenced in June 2003 and it quickly became clear that an area as vast as the APY Lands needed more than one RTC and subsequent consultations and negotiations reflected the requirement for a network.

At a General Meeting of Anangu Pitjantjatjara in August 2003, the decision was made to name the proposed network the PY Ku Network (Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjaraku – “for the people”).

The PY Ku Network was endorsed by the APY Lands COAG Steering Committee as a formal COAG Indigenous Trial initiative in September 2003.

What “endorsement as a COAG Trial initiative” meant was never clearly defined and the expected whole-of-government approach to establishing the PY Ku Network, particularly the provision of operational funds during the developmental years, never took place.

PY Ku is Australia’s only network of RTC’s and supports the major priorities identified by the APY Lands COAG Steering Committee and more recently by the TKP Regional Forum:

- Housing, infrastructure and essential services
- Safety
- Governance and leadership
- Health
- Education, training and employment
- Access to services

The PY Ku Network has built on the Networking the Nation and Rural Transaction Centre Programs. It has integrated building and technological infrastructure to provide essential services in this extremely remote region and is providing training and employment opportunities with real jobs.

The PY Ku Network

- Enjoys Anangu endorsement and universal community support
- Has undergone extensive community consultation
- Requires the active cooperation and involvement of all levels of government

PY Ku was originally overseen by the APY Lands COAG Steering Committee until these functions were assumed by the TKP Regional Forum.

Building Infrastructure

Rural Transaction Centres

A network of six purpose built customer service centres (Rural Transaction Centres) has been established across the APY Lands at:

- Indulkana (Iwantja)

- Mimili
- Kaltjiti (Fregon)
- Amata
- Pipalyatjara
- Watarru

These Centres provide a range of facilities and services including conference / training rooms and offices for hire. State of the art Information and Communications Technology has also been established and is further discussed below.

Leasing arrangements - ownership

PY Media was the first Anangu organisation to institute formal leasing arrangements with Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY - land council) for the land on which the PY Ku Centres are sited. These leases are currently on a five-year with five-year renewable option basis. A Purposes Deed has also been actioned jointly by APY (as the land-holding body), PY Media (as the owner / operator of the buildings) and the former Department of Transport and Regional Services (representing the Commonwealth of Australia; the funding body).

Visitor's Accommodation

Four two-bedroom short-stay units are currently under construction at:

- Mimili
- Umuwa
- Amata
- Pipalyatjara

These units will provide much needed visitor's accommodation for hire to trainers and visiting professionals, providing some income towards the cost of running the PY Ku Network.

Information and Communications Technology

PY Media recognises the important role Information and Communications Technology (ICT) plays for Anangu and is continually seeking ways in which to make ICT more readily available. Anangu learn technology and its applications quickly and PY Media could provide a range of multi-media training and employment options into the future.

All aspects of PY Media's work – radio, television, video, internet, intranet, video-conferencing – could be integrated and provided in production and broadcast facilities at the local level through PY Ku Centres.

Anangu do not have the same access in their homes to the technology that most people take for granted. On the APY Lands the PY Ku Centres provide their ICT "away from home".

Telephone

Since PY Media rolled out the I-Connect program in 2005/06, some individual households have access to private telephones, however many Anangu still do not, necessitating access to alternative means for contact with service providers.

There are public telephones in most communities, however access is unreliable due to difficulty obtaining the necessary repairs and maintenance.

Anangu use their PY Ku Centres for telephone contact.

Broadband

The (former) Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) contracted PY Media as a Community Based Demand Aggregation Broker to promote awareness of the benefits of broadband to communities on the APY Lands and to explore affordable pricing arrangements, greater supplier choice and improved access for community organisations. This resulted in a report; "The case for Broadband Services Provision on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (SA): An Aggregated Demand Strategy" in August 2005.

The South Australian Government funded Telstra to connect the following communities on the Lands to the pre-existing fibre-optic facilities for delivery of ADSL broadband services in September 2007:

- Indulkana (Iwantja)
- Mimili
- Kaltjiti (Fregon)
- Umuwa
- Pukatja (Ernabella)
- Amata
- Pipalyatjara

These communities were particularly targeted due to hosting PY Ku Centres and clinics.

Negotiations with Telstra to upgrade ADSL to ADSL 2+ or BDSL have been unsuccessful to date, however while it is considered that ADSL 2+ would be desirable, BDSL is the preferred option due to the projected increase in traffic over the next few years. It is understood that ADSL 2+ and BDSL are technically both feasible and would entail little expense, however it seems that Telstra's decision not to deploy is based on their reluctance to upgrade facilities and services in areas where there is no competition.

Network Server and internet facilities

The PY Ku Network supports internet, intranet and video-conferencing facilities. The server is housed in the Secure Data Centre in Darwin. This is owned and managed by Proactive Solutions, who also manage the data for the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT).

The server supports the internet system for both staff and customers (in the public-access internet area) of the PY Ku Network and work has begun on a proposal to share this technology and associated costs with Anangu Pitjantjatjara (AP) Services. The equipment is a thin-client system, allowing remote control of the network and associated software and minimising damage at the local level.

Electronic Receipting

A receipting system has been developed to run on the network server, however this requires further development based on service delivery. The receipting system will be able to receipt cash and non-cash-transactions, providing the ability to collect a full range of data.

Video-conferencing

With the securing of a new video-conferencing unit from the Backing Indigenous Ability program and an audit of existing (Networking-the-Nation funded) units, video-conferencing equipment will be available for all PY Ku Centres as well as the Umuwa PY Media office. There may be the potential to install / upgrade video-conferencing facilities in Wiltja Boarding House and Woodville High School in Adelaide for contact between Anangu students and families. There may also be the possibility of video conference calling between communities and relatives serving time in prisons.

Governance

PY Media is an incorporated organisation under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006.

Community elected representatives of the PY Media Board provide liaison between their communities, senior management of PY Media and Government. A local advisory committee is to be formed in each community, including representatives from community councils, PY Ku staff and PY Media elected representatives to provide support for PY Media operations, in particular local radio and PY Ku, at each Centre.

Staffing

Staffing structures in PY Media are continually under revision, due mainly to funding restrictions, making succession planning impossible.

Currently a General Manager manages the overall PY Media organisation and answers to the Board of Management. Each of the Media and PY Ku “branches” has Managerial positions, however the PY Ku Manager’s position remains vacant due to funding restrictions. The PY Ku Manager would normally oversee the Network of PY Ku Centres, staff and overall operations.

Staffing structures in each of the PY Ku Centres currently provide for a Supervisor, Community Service Officers (CSO) and Trainee Community Service Officers. Supervisor positions are non-Anangu specific and all other positions are designated Anangu. It is planned that eventually all Supervisory positions will be filled by Anangu, providing an all Anangu workforce in the Centres.

All PY Ku staff are required to complete TAFE Certificate 2 in Business Studies and those wishing to progress to Senior SCO or Supervisory positions are expected to complete TAFE Certificate 3, eventually leading to an all Anangu workforce.

PY Ku operates on an integrated service delivery model; staff are trained to deliver a range of services from their Centres and the Centres are networked, providing a regionally managed structure and networked ICT.

PY Media has now frozen all employment as it relates to PY Ku. This means the following:

- The PY Ku Regional Manager’s position will not be filled
- Several Supervisory positions will not be filled
- Several inexperienced Anangu staff are now unsupervised
- The Mimili PY Ku Centre will remain closed.

The PY Ku Network always has approximately a dozen Anangu staff in employment. Over the last six months twenty-one Anangu staff have been employed at various stages and have worked a total of 6,243 hours.

If PY Media were to receive recurrent funds and PY Ku run at capacity, approximately twenty Anangu could be employed.

Facilities and Services

Services originally requested

During ongoing community consultations since 2003 Anangu have consistently outlined major government services required in PY Ku Centres as being access to;

- Centrelink services
- Vehicle registration and licensing
- Firearms registration and licensing
- Court fines and expiation notice payments
- Birth, death and marriage certificates

in addition to banking and financial services and access to a range of office and technological facilities.

Above all, Anangu have continually expressed their desire to create real jobs with on-the-job training and real wages for their young people.

Facilities now available

A range of facilities are now available, including:

- Delivery of a range of face-to-face and transactional services
- Public and staff internet access
- Meeting rooms, conference and training facilities and offices for hire
- Public and staff access to video-conferencing facilities
- Administrative services and support

Services currently available

The only services currently available through PY Ku include;

- Centrelink services previously provided via Community Agent Program agreements
- Court Circuit
- Office hire
- Training and conference facilities hire

Services that could be delivered

Further expansion of services through the PY Ku Network is sought, including:

- SA Government services, in particular;

Attachment 1

- Drivers license and vehicle registration renewals
 - Firearms license and registration renewals
 - Court fines payments
 - Police Expiation Notice payments
 - Purchase of birth, death and marriage certificates
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- Australian Electoral Commission services
 - Translating and interpreting services
 - Services from the NT and WA Governments (similar to those requested from the SA Government)
 - Expansion of Australian Government services such as;
 - Medicare
 - Hearing Australia
 - Australian Taxation Office
 - Child Support Agency
 - Development of corporate support services in support of Anangu enterprise development such as;
 - Auspost
 - Mining support services
 - Tourism support services
 - Consumer and Financial Literacy and banking
 - Housing rental collection and repairs and maintenance reports

Consumer and financial literacy

Since 2003, a number of discussions have taken place with the financial services sector regarding the possible delivery of banking services on the APY Lands. These services were to be linked to financial counselling services provided by the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement and Families SA, basic budget advisory services to be provided by PY Ku staff (with appropriate training) and community messages and advertising campaigns. During 2007 positive discussions were had with ANZ, culminating in the submission of a detailed proposal to ANZ in May 2008. This has not been further actioned due to a lack of resources.

Income

All services are expected to be delivered on a fee-for-service basis with the generated income supporting Anangu training and employment and general operations of the Network.

For many years business development, or negotiation and contracting of services, has largely been unresolved due to the reluctance of agencies to deliver services through an organisation that cannot demonstrate financial viability. The required financial viability can only be derived from the raising of whole-of-government financial support. This support has never taken place, putting PY Media in the difficult position of now having to begin to wind down PY Ku operations.

Without a cross-agency commitment to the provision of funding over a three to six year basis, PY Media will be unable to negotiate new service contracts and employ and retain Aboriginal staff.

Recurrent funding options

There are two possible solutions to the issue of recurrent funding:

- Transfer of community and personal business functions and associated funding from the Municipal Services Program to PY Ku
- Grant funding from the Council of Australian Governments new National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery to PY Ku.

The first option has been proposed on several occasions over the last few years, in particular during the current unresolved review of regional service delivery on the APY Lands, however has not been actioned despite Anangu support.

The second option may provide the only option left that can prevent the loss of this most important initiative.

Transfer of community and personal business functions and associated funding from the Municipal Services Program to PY Ku

On a number of occasions since 2006 proposals have been developed and presented to government for an improved model of service delivery on the APY Lands which creates partnerships between PY Media (PY Ku Network), CDEP and AP Services and would contribute significantly to the financial viability of PY Ku. The proposals also recognise the long held Anangu intention for PY Ku to become the community and personal business “hubs” for the region.

The delivery of services throughout the APY Lands has been under review for several years. In particular the delivery of municipal services has been under review for the last two years. A number of proposals have been submitted to these reviews and the TKP Regional Forum outlining the role that PY Ku should play in a regional service delivery model.

A review of Municipal Services on the APY Lands commenced approximately two years ago and we are led to understand that any decisions about the future of service delivery is still at least eighteen months away. Whilst this may be due to conflict between the state and commonwealth about “ownership” of the program, the delay has meant that service delivery on the ground is not being addressed even

though there are Anangu regional organisations that are keen to resolve the issue and support the need to entrench PY Ku.

As at February 2009 there has still been no resolution to the issue of regional services delivery, nor any attempt on behalf of government at either level to meet with PY Media for discussion of possible options.

PY Media is strongly of the belief that regardless of any delays in discussions between the commonwealth and the state, an on-the-ground approach with Anangu organisations is urgently needed to address service delivery issues inclusive of municipal services and the PY Ku role. Without this the PY Ku Network will certainly fail.

Grant funding from the Council of Australian Governments new National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery to PY Ku.

In November 2008 COAG agreed to a new National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery providing \$291.2 million over six years. This funding is to target 26 remote Aboriginal communities, of which two are located on the APY Lands.

Among other things, benefits will apparently include;

- improved outcomes through access to education, employment and other services
- revitalised indigenous organisations with capacity to assist individuals and families to engage with all the opportunities associated with a better serviced region.

PY Media firmly believes that ensuring an endorsed initiative from the original COAG Indigenous Trials must be a priority in the new funding arrangements. It would seem an expensive and unnecessary duplication of existing arrangements to ignore PY Ku, an initiative that was fought for so strongly by Anangu.

Evaluation

A three year action research evaluation of PY Ku commenced in September 2007 and is being carried out by the Desert Knowledge - Cooperative Research Centre (DK - CRC). The Evaluation is to provide a working document series and final report to the DK - CRC and TKP Regional Forum. The Evaluation will provide input to the DK - CRC Core Project 5 - "Desert services that work" and outcomes against TKP (and previously COAG) Regional Priorities.

The research work aims to be flexible and inclusive of new programs and services as they develop.

Attachment 1

Clearly this valuable research work is now also under threat.