



Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation
PO Box 4607
Alice Springs NT 0871

Submission to
Senate Select Committee
on
Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities
PY Ku Network
(Council of Australian Governments Indigenous
Trail initiative – endorsed September 2003)

February 2009

The Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation appreciates the opportunity to make this submission.

This submission particularly relates to the following Terms of Reference of the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities:

- *The impact of state and territory government policies on the wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities*
- *The employment and enterprise opportunities in regional and remote Indigenous communities*

The submission seeks the support of the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Communities in securing appropriate long-term support for the PY Ku Network

INTRODUCTION

“A centrally managed network of community centres, combining service delivery with technology, providing opportunities for training and employment, incorporating shared counter facilities for service delivery and electronically linked multi-purpose meeting facilities. Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara – For the People” (Application for project assistance to the Rural Transaction Centres Program, December 2003).

The PY Ku Network is Australia’s only network of Rural Transaction Centres.
(Background Briefing attached)

Since 2003 the PY Ku Network has grown to include

- Purpose built customer service centres in six major locations on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands including office, meeting and conference facilities
- Broadband access and state-of-the-art networked ICT, video-conference, internet and electronic receipting facilities
- Visitor’s Accommodation units in four locations.

The Australian Government has spent over \$ 4.5 million on the establishment of the PY Ku Network.

The PY Ku Network provides a range of facilities and services to Anangu, visiting professionals and public servants including

- Delivery of a range of essential government and business services and transactions
- Meeting rooms and offices for hire by visiting professionals and public servants with access to state-of-the-art ICT and administrative support
- Short-term accommodation for visiting professionals and public servants

Most importantly, the PY Ku Network provides training and real employment to Anangu and has provided the building blocks for a more self-sufficient future.

The PY Ku Network was endorsed as a Council of Australian Governments Indigenous Trial initiative in September 2003

PY Ku was recognised as supporting the major priorities identified by the APY Lands COAG Steering Committee and more recently by the TKP Regional Forum; ie major improvements in:

- Housing, Infrastructure and Essential Services
- Safety
- Governance and Leadership
- Health
- Education, Training and Employment
- Access to services

The PY Ku Network is strongly recognised by Anangu as being their gateway to self-management.

Endorsement of PY Ku as a COAG initiative required the commitment of a range of government departments across both levels to provide an integrated approach to both establishing and operating the Network. There was an expectation of a whole-of-government approach to providing recurrent “foundation” funding during the operational development phase; a situation that never eventuated.

The Network’s infrastructure has been established and Anangu staff are now employed.

Without the necessary recurrent funding PY Ku will fail and Aboriginal staff will be retrenched

For many years warnings have been issued to government regarding the inability to develop fee-for-service business without the necessary recurrent “foundation” funding. These warnings have been ignored and the PY Ku Network has been expected to survive on occasional one-off fund injections. Government agencies are reluctant to deliver services through an organisation that cannot prove long term financial viability.

PY Ku cannot be sustained beyond June 2009 without a commitment to recurrent funding

Since April 2004 PY Ku has been managed by the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation (PY Media). PY Media is an incorporated Anangu organisation managing media, communications, ICT and service delivery across the APY Lands. PY Media is developing a formal learning and employment environment for Anangu with pathways through all branches of PY Media’s work.

PY Ku hosts a broadband based thin-client internet, intranet and video-conference system into which a range of other media could be integrated, including locally produced radio and television.

Without recurrent foundation funding all of these opportunities will be lost

PY Media cannot provide long term service delivery, succession planning or assurances of financial viability to agency or individual customers without the necessary recurrent foundation funding over a five year period.

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.

These Aboriginal staff will lose their positions.

Given that many of these staff are completing Level 2 and 3 Business Administration traineeships, losing them will be a shame.

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.

PY Media respectfully requests the assistance of the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities in sourcing either of these, or other, recurrent funding options.

Please see Background Brief at Attachment 1