



Green River
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Green River Aboriginal Corporation ABN: 67 426 476 941
Naiyu Nambiyu Land Trust (NNLT) ABN: 50 302 090 845
CMB Naiyu Community Daly River NT, 0822
www.grac.com.au

Inquiry into Local Decision Making

Green River Aboriginal Corporation, Naiyu, Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to your Inquiry into Local Decision Making (LDM). We value the chance to share insights into the challenges we have identified with transitioning services from the existing provider (local government) back to our community-owned and operated body, the Green River Aboriginal Corporation (GRAC).

Background

In 2008, the amalgamation of community councils into super shires disempowered communities by removing the services that responded to their local needs and created employment opportunities. The resulting centralisation of services to Katherine through the Victoria Daly Regional Council saw the loss of self-determination and economic opportunity at Naiyu.

We believed that the introduction of Local Decision Making was a way to return those services and programs to the community, giving local voices a stronger say in how they can better respond to local needs.

Capability

The Naiyu Community Board, Chaired by this year's Senior Australian of the Year, Miriam Baumann, oversees the Green River Aboriginal Corporation. They have appointed a General Manager and program coordinator.

The Board is a powerful conduit for community aspirations, so it is well placed to deliver programs and services that reflect the community's wishes.

The Board and its General Manager have worked closely with NT government representatives to develop an LDM implementation plan over the past year a long-term, phased plan that Government will provide to GRAC Board have signed off by end August 2021.

The transition of government services and programs to community control

Following the guidelines of the LDM the Victoria Daly Council handed back the Sport and Recreation and Naiyu After School programs to Green River Aboriginal Corporation earlier this year.

The community prioritised this hand back because they have been underutilised since the NIAA funded the Victoria Daly Council to run these programs 13 years ago.

The hand back should have been straightforward because the program facilities and grounds are all owned by GRAC, and Victoria Daly secured them through a one dollar peppercorn lease.

We believe the challenges and issues that we have faced during this handover serve as a case study that this inquiry should note.

Sport and recreation case study

The GRAC Board wrote to the Victoria Daly Council CEO in May 2020 to say that it would like to transition responsibility for Sport and Recreation back to the community over a three to six month period, with the lease due to end by June 2020.

The Victoria Daly Council CEO rang the GRAC GM to invite the Board to a Council Meeting in Katherine on the 10th June 2020.

After this initial meeting, rather than a smooth transition of the sport and recreation programs, GRAC witnessed a range of blockages set in place by the regional council, that resulted in the services shutting down for a year.

Council's non-compliance, challenging phone calls, and possibility of equipment, and in fact, taking necessary equipment from the community and blocking funding led to GRAC changing the locks on the facility in November 2020. Finally, with support and encouragement from NT Government staff, the NIAA worked with GRAC to facilitate an MOU between GRAC and the Victoria Daly Council to transition the services, equipment and funding to GRAC.

The community endured a year of youth issues, including crime, because the young ones had no sport, recreation and after school activities to keep them occupied while GRAC continued to try to get the services back.

Even after the NIAA drafted the MOU, GRAC still faced problems getting the the funding transferred to run the services.

In fact, the NIAA agreed that GRAC would run a school holiday program from the 16th April 2021 using its own funds so the kids would have something to do.

This allowed for excursions to the Territory Wildlife Park, and daily community events such as cooking activities at the Nauiyu Centre.

GRAC received the NT Government funding, that had still been going to the Victoria Daly Council, on 30th June 2021.

Since April, GRAC has run the Sport and Recreation program and employed six local staff.

The Recreation Centre is now open six days per week with structured programs including night activities such as youth discos and movie nights. The AFL Football team, Nauiyu Buffaloes, has now joined Roper League for weekly games and has been invited in 2022 to join Katherine Big Rivers league incorporating a Junior Side and a womens AFL side.

We are also running programs incorporating culture trips on country, which has created employment for retired elders.

More opportunities

GRAC is now in discussion with the Victoria Daly Council CEO about handing back the Parks and Gardens, and waste management service. If these are run locally, they will create job pathways for our young men and women. They will also be more in tune with local issues, including environmental concerns.

We also aspire to take back the Council run (NIAA funded) Night Patrol, and change the model so it better engages the community using a consultation and prevention approach, rather than its current

police style operation. We would like this service to incorporate a school pick up service, and transfer to sport and recreation after school, to promote better school attendance.

The NT Government is proactively working with GRAC on the Room To Breathe Housing upgrades. GRAC has partnered with Big River Housing to complete \$3.8 million worth of work, and has achieved an average of 67.3% local Aboriginal employment.

GRAC is also discussing the NT Government housing maintenance contract and Community Housing Officer employment with the NT Government. The Board has engaged with Justice and Education about how we can better work together to provide locally grown social services.

In summary, it is clear that locally run programs and services that are based on community engagement and reflect our community's preferences are well supported, which is a strong endorsement for the LDM philosophy. However, the problems lie in the lack of structured help in transitioning services from organisations that will likely lose funding and resources because of the hand back. It is unrealistic to expect local organisations like GRAC, to defend the concept of LDM and wrangle back the services from often unwilling former service providers.

Senior Australian Of The Year 2021

Chairperson

GREEN RIVER ABORIGINAL

CORPORATION NAUIYU COMMUNITY DALY

RIVER NT

Yours

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Miriam Rose'Baumann', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Miriam Rose'Baumann