



LAYNHAPUY HOMELANDS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

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Public Accounts Committee

RE: Views and Experience with Local Decision Making (LDM)

The Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation (Laynha) was registered with ORIC in 2012 and prior to that operated as an association since 1985. Its main office is at Yirrkala in northeast Arnhem Land, from where it acts as the resource centre for around 30 Homeland settlements across a region of around 6,500sqm. Laynha delivers services across a broad range of areas, including, Health, Community Services, Infrastructure and it also has its own Ranger group, known as the Yirrkala Rangers. The Yirrkala Rangers are one of the largest ranger group's in Australia. The size of the Homelands that Laynha services vary from large, permanently occupied settlements of over 100 people to those that are only seasonally occupied with small populations. Several Homelands are inaccessible by road during the wet season. The travel time by road to the most distant Homelands is about five hours, depending on the condition of the unsealed road. One Homeland is an island, so accessible by boat and charter plane or helicopter. Almost all Homelands have an all-year airstrip (also maintained by Laynha).

Laynha signed the LDM Partnership Commitment on 30 May 2019 in Nhulunbuy. Following on from the signing, there were a number of meetings held with the Nhulunbuy Chief Minister's Office representatives with minutes circulated following the meeting. There were generally two Yolngu Directors from Laynha attending these meetings with Balanda (non-Yolngu) Government representatives. The meetings continued until 2021 after which the LDM Partnership Commitment expired in May 2021. The Laynha Directors that participated as representing Laynha did not come to any agreement with Government as there was never anything for them to make a decision about. While there were a number of meetings, there were no clear agreed actions or implementation plans with attached outcomes for the community. They have provided feedback to the local member, Mr Yingiya Guyula about their experiences.

Laynha Directors belong to different clan groups across Northeast Arnhem Land. They are focused on their own Homelands but come together to discuss Laynha's business in relation to shared and common services including infrastructure, housing, health and Yirrkala Rangers. Some Laynha Directors have their own separate Corporations for the purposes of tourism and business development.

Our understanding is that the intent of, LDM is a tool to build more engagement between Indigenous peoples and Government and subsequently deliver better outcomes. Additionally, about giving the power of decision making back to the Indigenous peoples. However, our experience was that it was difficult to interpret what outcomes were expected from the LDM agreement, who the LDM agreement would be with and how the outcomes would be achieved. Laynha supports the concept of LDM, but has not seen actions to date or communication of this policy. There also still remains a question about how impactful this decision making can be under static policy settings.

Much of the issues Laynha experiences in its service delivery to an Aboriginal person is that the Government has already decided who it's for and how much it is. The day to day impact of this is impaired due to a cumbersome, centrally decided, inflexible and therefore costly administrative process which is not visible to Homelands communities. This results in the persons receiving a service which isn't their highest priority. For example, housing stock is unsuitable for the occupants. If Government (Federal or state) only lets go of service delivery rather than decision making, the above outcomes are likely to be repeated.

Laynha holds concerns regarding the frequency and coordination of consultation with Indigenous leaders by different groups including Government bodies, academics and other organisations leading to a lack of effective and joined up outcomes. Currently there is request for information from multiple levels of Government including Treaty, Truth-telling and Voice. In a culture where nothing is written and everything is verbal, it's difficult to imagine what it must be like to be consulted on so many aspects of your life and then see marginal change. This is well documented with the Closing the Gap targets. As the key service delivery organisation for homelands, Laynha must be part of these consultations to ensure there is continuity of messaging and clear actions.

Separately locally developed models

Laynha's Yirralka Rangers has established three ward malas (steering committees) as a form of LDM. The ward malas are made up of members from each Homeland selected for their local knowledge and experience. These representatives are members of Laynha and also Homeland Community members. The ward malas are a simple innovative way to make decisions to both draw out the needs and priorities for the homelands, but also increase paid employment on homelands. There ward malas will guide decision making for Laynha with the endorsement of our board of directors.

Laynha requests for these ward malas to be the main mechanism for Government and non-Government consultation, in particular LDM, through which Laynha will act as facilitator. Our view is, this is consistent with the LDM framework and enables Homelands to self determine their priorities and inform Government.

Yours sincerely,



Kerry Legge
Chief Executive Officer
Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation