**Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) Advisory Committee Meeting**

**25-28 October 2022**

**Communiqué**

The Aboriginals Benefit Account Advisory Committee (ABAAC) is established under subsection 65(1) of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA) to advise the Minister for Indigenous Australians on debiting the ABA (the Account) for the benefit of Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory (NT). Members of the ABAAC are nominated by their respective Land Councils and the Chair is appointed by the Minister for Indigenous Australians.

The ABAAC met from 25-28 October 2022 in Darwin. The meeting considered 166 applications submitted to 2 October 2022, totalling around $320 million in requested funding. Advice will shortly be provided to the Minister. Outcomes are anticipated to be announced in December 2022.

The ABAAC Chair Ms Leeanne Caton, and Co-Chair Mr Samuel Bush-Blanasi welcomed members to the meeting, from the Tiwi Land Council region – Mr Stanley Tipiloura (virtual); from the Anindilyakwa Land Council region – Mr Thomas Amagula (proxy for Mr Tony Wurramarrba AO); from the Central Land Council region – Ms Barbara Shaw, Mr Kim Brown, Mr Robert Hoosan, Ms Sandra Morrison (virtual), and Mr Warren Williams; and from the Northern Land Council region – Mr Bobby Wunungmurra, Mr Graham Kenyon,  Ms Lisa Mumbin OAM (virtual), Ms Lorraine Jones, Mr Peter Lansen, and Mr Wayne Wauchope.

Apologies were received from Mr Tony Wurramarrba AO (ALC).

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) provided an update on the financial situation of the ABA. The opening balance of the Account as at 1 July 2022 totalled $1,419.46 million. The year-to-date revenue equates to $206.56 million; expenditure is $145.26 million, and commitments are $868.45 million. The estimated available balance is $612.31m million (refer Attachment).

An update on the ABA Homelands Project was provided by the NIAA. Of the 180 homelands participating in the project. Works in 87 homelands are completed; works in 37 homelands are underway or beginning. Applications are pending for 17 homelands. NIAA is working with other Agencies and the NTG to coordinate delivery of mobile/WiFi telecommunications to homelands.

Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation (NTAIC) Interim Board members provided an update on the establishment of the NTAIC.

The Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney, attended virtually to meet ABAAC members and thank them for their and previous ABAAC members’ important contribution over many decades towards improving the lives of First Nations Northern Territorians.

This is the final meeting of the ABAAC before the NTAIC assumes responsibility of managing ABA grants processes. This year also marks 70 years since the establishment of the first fund to receive royalties for mining and timber interests in the NT, then called the Aborigines Benefits Trust Fund (ABTF).

The meeting concluded with recognition of ABAAC’s significant contribution to ABA outcomes.

Additional information on ABA grant funding, including previous ABAAC messages and transition to the Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation (NTAIC) ABA grants program is available on the NIAA website.

Leeanne Caton

Chair

Aboriginals Benefit Account Advisory Committee

28 October 2022