

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

**15-18 March 2021**

### **Communiqué**

The Aboriginals Benefit Account Advisory Committee (ABAAC) is established under subsection 65(1) of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* 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 Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP.

The ABAAC met from 15-18 March 2021 in Darwin to consider applications submitted in the August 2020 ABA grant funding round and will shortly provide advice to the Minister. It is anticipated outcomes of the round will be announced in mid-2021.

The ABAAC Chair Ms Leeanne Caton, and Co-Chair Mr Samuel Bush-Blanasi welcomed members from the Northern Land Council (NLC) Region - Mr David Harvey, Mr Graham Kenyon, Mr Matthew Ryan (proxy for John Christophersen), Ms Lisa Mumbin OAM, Ms Yananyumul Mununggurr, Ms Lorraine Jones and Mr Peter Lansen; from the Central Land Council (CLC) Region – Ms Barbara Shaw, Mr Robert Hoosan and Mr Jeffrey Zimran; from the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) Region - Mr Tony Wurramarrba AO; and from the Tiwi Land Council (TLC) Region - Mr Brian Tipungwuti. Apologies were tendered for Ms Leah Leaman, CLC Region and Mr John Christophersen, NLC Region.

The ABAAC held a minute's silence for Mr Nelson, a dedicated long-serving CLC member of the ABAAC who played a significant role representing the people of the Tanami region. The ABAAC also paid respects to Ms Rubuntji, a respected anti-violence campaigner.

Officials from the NT Government's Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet and Department of Health presented information on the COVID-19 vaccination roll out, addressing ABAAC members' questions on issues faced by Aboriginal communities.

ORIC provided governance training to the members of the ABAAC. The session included an overview of the Account, grant funding and governance.

The ABAAC spoke with Minister Wyatt on ABA applications and the direction of funding. The Minister emphasised that funding from the ABA should not replace the funding responsibilities of agencies and organisations that receive government support. Minister Wyatt acknowledged the importance of funding for homelands and said he would welcome ABAAC's views on what is needed in this area.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) ABA Projects team spoke with the ABAAC about how it communicates with potential applicants and its messaging relating to ABA funding.

The current messaging is:

- funding is for one-off projects that benefit Aboriginal people in the NT;
- ABA supports projects that lie outside the responsibility of government funding;
- NT Aboriginal controlled organisations are encouraged to apply; and
- all potential applicants should seek advice from the ABA team in the NIAA by calling 1800 354 612.

The opening balance of the Account as at 1 July 2020 totalled \$1,266.90 million. As at 28 February 2021, the year to date revenue equates to \$387.39 million and expenditure of \$263.26 million. The current financial year has commitments of \$51.71 million and there are commitments post 2020-21 of \$78.29 million. The estimated available balance as at 28 February 2021 is \$1,261.03 million (Attachment A).

The NIAA Land Rights Policy team provided an overview of the co-design process for greater Aboriginal control of the ABA. The ABAAC supports the concept, in particular giving greater control of grant decision making to Aboriginal people, and looks forward to its continuing involvement in the co-design process.

The ABAAC Guidelines are under review and will introduce an open round for ABA applicants. The guidelines will be more flexible for Aboriginal people to apply for ABA funding. These guidelines when approved will be in place until any new arrangements for the ABA are agreed and implemented.

Additional information on ABA grant funding, including previous ABAAC messages and advice on how to apply for funding, is available on the NIAA website at:

<https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/grants-and-funding/aboriginal-benefit-account-aba-grant-funding>

The next ABAAC meeting will be held in the final quarter of 2021 to consider grant applications from the new ABA open funding round.



Leeanne Caton  
Chair  
Aboriginals Benefit Account Advisory Committee

18 March 2021

## ABA Special Account - Available Balance as at 28 February 2021:

