



**Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
Women's Council (Aboriginal Corporation)**

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Manager
Philanthropic & Exemptions Unit
Personal & Retirement Income Division
The Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: Improving the Integrity of Prescribed Private Funds – The Treasury – Discussion Paper
November 2008**

In November last year The Treasury released for public comment a discussion paper on improving the integrity of prescribed private funds. The Balnaves Foundation (Foundation) has advised NPY Women's Council that they have lodged a submission in response to that call from The Treasury. In support of their submission, Tjanpi Desert Weavers (Tjanpi), NPY Women's Council, a current recipient of funding from the Foundation submits the following:

1. Tjanpi Desert Weavers is the dynamic social enterprise of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council (Aboriginal Corporation) ICN 2043 (NPYWC). From small beginnings in the mid 1990s, the artistic and commercial profile of Tjanpi Desert Weavers (Tjanpi) has grown in reputation and significance. Today Tjanpi fibre art is in the collections of most of Australia's major public institutions and several private collections, and artists are in demand around the country by galleries and festivals for their fibre art, weaving workshops and inma.

NPYWCW is pleased that through Tjanpi, employment and enterprise opportunities have open up for over 300 Anangu women in the NPY tri-state border region of NT, WA and SA. In a region where overall numbers of Anangu women in employment is low and where the majority of adults are welfare dependent, this is no small matter.

2. The funding profile of Tjanpi Desert Weavers is similar to most organisations in the not-for-profit sector including NPYWC. In the last financial year, Tjanpi received funding from 10 different funding sources, as well as generating a small amount of income from the sale of fibre art and other products and materials. Of the 10 funding providers only 2 are non-government sources and of those two one is the Balnaves Foundation, from the philanthropic sector.

Managing funding received from the government sector has its challenges, of which NPYWC is acutely aware. Our organisation was one of 22 Indigenous organisations that participated in 'A Red Tape Evaluation of Selected Indigenous Communities', commissioned by the Australian government in 2006.

3. NPY Women's Council is not suggesting that it is possible to compare apples with apples because government has a different reporting and policy framework.
4. However, it is our experience that the philanthropic sector does overall provide a greater flexibility in regards to the projects and organisations that they fund. For example, philanthropic organisations:

- are often willing to support organisations with projects that fall between government priorities. Without support from the philanthropic sector there would be much greater pressure on government to meet increasing demands from the not-for-profit sector;
- are structured to be responsive to changing needs of recipients;
- allow for a wider range of use of funding – both operational and project;
- readily offer and more willingly invite multi-year funding arrangements; and
- not only is cash provided – funding relationships can develop into mutually beneficial long-term partnerships not limited to financial support, with ngapartji ngapartji knowledge and skills sharing, resulting in organisational capacity building, community strengthening and inspiring cultural exchange for all partners.

5. Further, NPY Women's Council provides the following specific examples in relation to the benefits of working in partnership with the philanthropic sector:

- Due to providing longer term funding through a project partnership framework (the Foundation has committed funds \$317,4000 to Tjanpi for three years), the Foundation has provided Tjanpi with the opportunity to strategically and methodically prioritise actions to facilitate much needed new professional development opportunities for artists including:
 - successfully promote the development of artistic skills via workshops, artist visits, camps and exhibitions including a large-scale touring exhibition with Gold Coast City Art Gallery;
 - enabled the accumulating of profiles and documentation that will contribute towards the Tjanpi Book Development which will tell the Tjanpi story through various stories and photos;
 - allowed for weavers to have more opportunities to share skills with other artists – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, and make really special fibre art for exhibitions; and
 - enabled Tjanpi to develop new forms, techniques, expressions and quality of work; to expand the skills to new communities; as well as to develop its profile.

This has been characterised through the promotion of employment of Anangu for Tjanpi business.

6. In his address to the Cape York Institute Conference **Strong Foundations – Rebuilding Social Norms in Indigenous Communities - Creating The Right Incentives for Indigenous Development**, June 2007, Dr Ken Henry, Secretary to The Treasury stated:

“The core reason for the limited success in Indigenous policy over many years, in my view, is that too little of this policy has been focused on addressing the underlying causes of disadvantage. I know that this has been central to the mission of the Institute, so today I’m really continuing a conversation on identifying the nature of the underlying causes.

I would suggest that there are three key interdependent foundations of Indigenous disadvantage:

- *Poor economic and social incentives;*
- *The underdevelopment of human capital and of capability in general; and*
- *An absence of the effective engagement of Indigenous Australians in the design of policy frameworks that might improve social and economic incentives and build capabilities.*

Perverse incentives – those which encourage undesirable behaviours - are having a negative impact on many Indigenous communities, reducing self-reliance, self-development and also the commitment to caring for families and communities. Of particular importance here are the two issues that dominate this conference. The first is the effect of the combined incentives in the welfare system, which have resulted in disengagement and, in many cases, a passive reliance on welfare payments - and also done little to encourage Indigenous Australians to invest in education and participate in employment. And the second relates to the breakdown of foundational social norms in Indigenous communities.”

7. With the support of the Balnaves Foundation, Tjanpi Desert Weavers has enabled Anangu women to tackle those key interdependence foundations of Indigenous disadvantage mentioned by Dr Ken Henry. Through employment and participation in product development, Anangu women are engaging in the enterprise, thereby gaining for themselves and their family’s financial benefit. Further, as Tjanpi artists boldly model leadership, discipline and commitment in their communities, they are inspiring their communities to take on greater responsibilities rather than passively allow perverse incentives. Clearly as a social enterprise committed to developing the capacity of people, such aspirations require long term funding with certainty both for the PPF and the community organisation.
8. In their submission, the Balnaves Foundation has argued that ‘Philanthropy requires a long term approach to major issues facing community. A lack of perpetuity will make this very difficult and certainly result in a short term focus.’ Tjanpi also expresses its concern that the changes proposed through the discussion paper may provide disincentives rather than incentives to people to remain or enter the sector.

9. As the Balnaves Foundation has stated in their submission, NPYWC would also support measures designed to improve and enhance the integrity of the operation of PPFs. However, if those improvements result in PPFs experiencing increased funding uncertainties, resulting in fewer PPFs being established or, in the extreme, a closing down of existing PPFs, then such a decline would be of grave detriment to organisations such as Tjanpi Desert Weavers, which sees the benefit of a hybrid and balanced model of funding. For many years Aboriginal organisations have relied on governments to support Aboriginal organisations. The opening up of funding opportunities through the philanthropic sector has enabled Aboriginal organisations to experience a different level of flexibility, creativity and enterprise in delivering projects. These benefits should be acknowledged and protected rather than stripped away.
10. NPYWC suggests that a numbers of key learnings have been gained from such partnerships in the past and those lessons have provided the basis for new ways of delivering projects which have become industry standards such as in Indigenous employment, small business, and social ventures. If such opportunities were to become more limited because of disincentives imposed on the philanthropic sector, Aboriginal organisations may fail to see the future gains that can emerge through long-term, enduring partnerships with Aboriginal organisations.

If you would like to discuss any of the matters raised in this submission please contact Karin Riederer, Tjanpi Manager, on 08 8958 2377.

Yours faithfully



Andrea Mason
Acting Co-ordinator

cc Karin Riederer
Tanya Laker
Neil Balnaves