



# JULIAN LEESER MP

Shadow Minister for Education  
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians  
Federal Member for Berowra

Dr Caralee McLiesh PSM  
Auditor-General  
By email: [External.Relations@anao.gov.au](mailto:External.Relations@anao.gov.au)

29 May 2026

Dear Auditor-General,

I write in my capacity as Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians to ask that you undertake an urgent audit of the effectiveness of the National Indigenous Australians Agency in its oversight of Commonwealth expenditure related to Town Camps and remote Indigenous communities.

The urgency of the issue is self-evident. The recent death of Kumanjaya Little Baby has highlighted the unsafe living conditions for children in Town Camps and some remote Indigenous communities – and in particular the Old Timers Camp in Alice Springs from where Kumanjaya Little Baby was taken.

The risks to children are obvious. Children are being raised in homes which in some cases appear not to have working showers or cooktops, where there are no locks on the doors, and where they are exposed to alcohol, crime and violence. These risks should not be tolerated for any Australian child for one minute more.

Nevertheless, significant Commonwealth funding for groups which are responsible for these Town Camps and remote communities – and related services and programs – has not resulted in a safe environment for children. Funding to the Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation, for example, which is associated with the Old Timers Town Camp in Alice Springs, is a case in point. In Estimates on 26 May 2026, NIAA officials were questioned about \$70m in Commonwealth spending directed towards Tangentyere Council from that agency. Officials specifically noted as follows:

*I would also say that we are not the only funder of Tangentyere. So we are one of many.*

Subsequent investigations suggest Tangentyere is in fact in direct receipt of around **\$81.6m** in Commonwealth funding across at least **38** different grant or contractual agreements from at least **7** different agencies. A list is **attached**. This list does not include arrangements over recent years which have now concluded, or arrangements that are currently on foot where Tangentyere Council has been the recipient of funding indirectly – such as the **\$3.2m** project for a Community Justice Centre referred to by officials from the Attorney-General's Department in Estimates on 25 May 2026, in relation to which Tangentyere is a consortium partner but not the funded entity.

It is worth noting that this spending coincides with a near-doubling of executive pay by Tangentyere Council, as was acknowledged by officials in Senate Estimates on 26 May 2026.

Plainly, this spending from across the Commonwealth has not been effective in creating a safe environment for children. What is particularly concerning, however, is that there appears to be no coordination or central oversight, nor any work to map the net effect of Commonwealth expenditure to material improvements in conditions on the ground. There is no holistic view.

Rather, the clear impression is that funding arrangements are siloed. Instead of looking at the overall impact of Commonwealth expenditure across the board, each official or agency appears to be focused on whether compliance and reporting targets were met within the specific framework of the grant arrangements that they administer. This approach was exemplified in response to questions to the NIAA from Senator Nampijinpa Price in Estimates on 26 May 2026:

*Senator Nampijinpa Price: So you're comfortable, then, with outcomes as you see them?*

*Witness: For the services that we fund Tangentyere for – yes.*

Further questioning also highlighted the lack of central coordination or a holistic approach:

*Senator Nampijinpa Price: How much money has been directed to Tangentyere Council in total from across the Commonwealth since May 2022?*

*Witness: I'm sorry Senator, I wouldn't have that figure. I could only speak for the NIAA funding.*

This lack of coordination and failure to advance a holistic whole-of-government approach runs counter to the function of the NIAA as set out in the Executive Order by which it was established. That order specifies that its functions are, among other things:

- i. to lead and coordinate Commonwealth ... implementation and service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; [...]*
- vi. to ...coordinate the delivery of community development employment projects; [...]*
- viii. to coordinate Indigenous portfolio agencies and advance a whole-of-government approach to improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;*

Moreover, there is presently an oversight gap at the Parliamentary level: in the absence of cross-portfolio Estimates hearings dedicated to the Indigenous Australians portfolio, the Parliament has no single forum to examine the net impact of Commonwealth programs on Indigenous Australians.

The need for greater accountability for expenditure on these matters is recognised to at least some degree across party lines. On 8 May 2026, for instance, the Member for Lingiari, told ABC radio that:

*...the Commonwealth does need to take more of a lead and show more leadership in terms of where does the money go, why are we still seeing these issues, why are we still seeing kids falling through the gap and dying...*

I ask that you establish an audit of the effectiveness of the National Indigenous Australians Agency in its oversight of Commonwealth expenditure related to Town Camps and remote Indigenous communities as soon as practicable, in the interests of ensuring that Commonwealth expenditure is effective in ensuring the safety of children.

Yours sincerely,



Julian Leeser MP

**Attachment:** List of current grants and contractual arrangements with Tangentyere

**Commonwealth grants and contracts currently on foot - Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation**

	Number	Recipient	Agency	Purpose	Expiry Date	Value
1.	GA520586	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Youth Employment Pathways (YEP) - Indigenous Youth Employment Program - Job Creation	30 Jun 28	\$2,850,913.66
2.	GA517218-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Alice Springs Town Camps - Environmental Health and Community Maintenance - CJBF	30 Jun 28	\$463,650.00
3.	GA238165- V11	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Access to Education (A2E)	30 Jun 27	\$8,585,873.19
4.	GA326582-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Tangentyere Land and Learning Bilingual Resources Project 2023-25	30 Jun 26	\$591,841.03
5.	GA481252-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) Support	30 Jun 27	\$651,398.00
6.	GA520775-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	RAES - Region 23 - Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (NTAS)	30 Jun 28	\$21,410,875.20

	Number	Recipient	Agency	Purpose	Expiry Date	Value
7.	GA242934-V8	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Tangentyere Council Outside School Hours Care	31 Dec 26	\$1,103,607.01
8.	GA520587	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Youth Employment Pathways (YEP) - Indigenous Youth Employment Program - CJBF	30 Jun 28	\$580,554.15
9.	GA254781-V8	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Tangentyere Indigenous Youth Connecting to OUR Culture	30 Jun 28	\$1,254,087.23
10.	GA517219	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Alice Springs Town Camps - Environmental Health and Community Maintenance - Job Creation	30 Jun 28	\$3,572,940.68
11.	GA178091-V6	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	CAYLUS Core Funding 2021 - 2027	30 Jun 27	\$11,229,198.85
12.	GA330789-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Town Camp Leadership Project	30 Jun 26	\$309,885.40
13.	GA397766-V5	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Tangentyere Night and Youth Patrol	30 Jun 26	\$2,828,434.33
14.	GA495447-V3	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Women's Voices	30 Jun 27	\$2,628,437.43

	Number	Recipient	Agency	Purpose	Expiry Date	Value
15.	GA352822	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Capital Works Schedule	30 Jun 27	\$9,390,150.00
16.	GA544882	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Child & Youth Outreach Service - Afterhours Town Camp Youth Services	30 Jun 27	\$841,500.00
17.	GA544422	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Postvention Support - Play Therapy Finke and Titjikala	30 Jun 26	\$55,000.00
18.	GA471543-V3	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Tangentyere Early Childhood Education Supported Playgroups	31 Dec 26	\$1,628,330.31
19.	GA522801	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Tangentyere Junior Rangers - a pathway to school, a pathway to work	31 Dec 27	\$818,936.80
20.	CN4191748	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Project management	30 Sep 26	\$73,682.40
21.	CN3991179	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Business Administration Services	30 Jun 26	\$413,751.80
22.	GA495200	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Attorney-General's Department	Justice Reinvestment in Central Australia	30 Jun 27	\$1,650,957.00
23.	CN4146432	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Attorney-General's Department	Specialist Input	23 Jun 26	\$215,690.64
24.	CN4136550	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Australian Electoral Commission	Indigenous Electoral Participation	17 Mar 27	\$71,720.00

	Number	Recipient	Agency	Purpose	Expiry Date	Value
25.	GA407828-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health and Aged Care	Indigenous Employment Initiative Program	30 Jun 26	\$435,211.64
26.	GA483287-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$1,343,127.86
27.	GA485998-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$288,318.26
28.	GA486557-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$1,343,624.69
29.	GA486233-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$446,245.99
30.	GA486272-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$39,931.85
31.	GA482666	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$15,806.60
32.	GA487375-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$325,555.91
33.	GA484734	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$343,968.31
34.	GA485970-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Commonwealth Home Support Program	31 Jul 27	\$302,890.08

	Number	Recipient	Agency	Purpose	Expiry Date	Value
35.	GA388920	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support	30 Nov 27	\$1,254,000.00
36.	GA538303-V1	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Social Services	Strengthening Families and Communities - Tangentyere Mens Family Safety Group	30 Jun 28	\$523,325.00
37.	GA266396-V5	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Social Services	4AP2 Specialised Family Violence Services	30 Jun 27	\$1,477,111.33
38.	GA442104-V2	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Department of Social Services	Children and Parent Support Services	31 Jan 27	\$217,542.94
					<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 81,578,075.57</b>