

17 May 2021

Indigenous Voice Co-design Groups
C/- National Indigenous Australians Agency

Dear Indigenous Voice Co-Design Groups

Re: Local and Regional Voices – Yolŋu Region

This submission has been prepared at the request of the members of the Yolŋu Region Local Decision Making Partnership Commitment (the Partnership).

The Partnership was established in 2019 to explore the opportunity through the Northern Territory Government's Local Decision Making Policy to 'simplify local and regional governance to ensure systems of decision making are Yolŋu led and owned and which enables Yolŋu cultural leadership and people to be at the heart of decisions for the benefit of their people'. The Partnership, which includes all tiers of government and important regional and local Aboriginal Corporations is available at <https://ldm.nt.gov.au/about-ldm/east-arnhem>.

Under the guidance of a Working Group of Yolŋu leaders, workshops are beginning to take place across the region to allow Yolŋu to identify their aspirations for community control and self-determination, and the ways that they would like to engage with all levels of government. This process was initially delayed to ensure the risks of COVID-19 could be appropriately managed; while it is now progressing, doing this work properly takes time.

For the past six months, members of the Partnership have been discussing the need to work with other initiatives and opportunities to support self-determination for Yolŋu, such as the Australian Government's Empowered Communities model, and now the Local and Regional Voice process.

Many of the proposed Local and Regional Voice Principles are shared across the Local Decision Making initiatives in the Yolŋu region, including the principle of non-duplication and links with existing bodies. Members of the Partnership consider non-duplication to be essential to avoid confusion about the different processes afoot: they are concerned to make sure that these processes are opportunities to unite, rather than divide, Yolŋu.

The Members of the Partnership therefore invite you to discuss how the Local and Regional Voice process can work hand-in-hand with the significant efforts already underway towards empowerment and self-determination for Yolŋu, including through Local Decision Making.

My office provides secretariat support for the Partnership. If you would like to take up this invitation, please contact me to arrange a time for further conversation.

We note that while the majority of members of the of the Partnership supported this submission (or supported it in-principle), some were unable to have the matter formally considered by their boards in the time available. We also note that East Arnhem Regional Council proposed some alternative elements of this submission, which were unable to be fully considered by the members of the Partnership in the time available.

Yours sincerely



Jim Rogers

Executive Director - East Arnhem