

NIRRUMBUK ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Statement

HON ROSIE SAHANNA (Mining and Pastoral) [6.18 pm]: I take this opportunity to speak about an incredible organisation based in Broome. The Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation celebrated its thirtieth anniversary last week on Friday, 8 September. It was a momentous occasion for an organisation that continues to do so much for the community. Community members, stakeholders, and past and current staff of Nirrumbuk came together last week to celebrate the remarkable 30-year journey of the corporation.

The milestone is a testament to the strength, resilience and enduring spirit of Nirrumbuk. The organisation has grown from the robust leadership and direction set by the Nirrumbuk board of directors, who set the course from the onset, making early decisions that determined that welfare dependency was not the future. As a result, the organisation quickly pivoted and focused on developing economic opportunities that would help create employment and also address social needs of members and users of Nirrumbuk's services.

The key pillars that the board instilled throughout the organisation include working together and respecting each other, adapting to change and striving for sustainable growth, and never losing sight of where they came from. Throughout the last 30 years, Nirrumbuk has achieved remarkable milestones. It has set up several standalone entities including Nirrumbuk Environmental Health and Services, Kullarri Building Pty Ltd, Djaringo Pty Ltd, Broome Electrical Services Ltd and Kullarri Employment Services Pty Ltd. All of these entities are well managed and create employment and deliver effective services throughout the Kimberley.

Nirrumbuk has also established several joint ventures and partnerships with many other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, entities and stakeholders and has supported a number of Aboriginal entrepreneurs to establish their own businesses. Nirrumbuk is focused on supporting disengaged young people to re-engage with the community and work towards positive career pathways. It has assisted many young people through the advancement of education and training, leading them into sustainable employment opportunities and also creating opportunities for many to participate in employment through the delivery of programs and services that empower Aboriginal people to lead healthier and happier lives.

A key indicator of Nirrumbuk's success is the growth in employment the corporation has experienced, especially in the last five years. In 2018, it employed 122 people; it currently employs over 215 with more than 75 per cent identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Nirrumbuk's involvement in the local economy and Aboriginal employment cannot be denied. The 30-year journey has not been without its challenges but Nirrumbuk has faced adversity head-on, overcoming obstacles and working hard to create a brighter future for generations to come. I am confident that Nirrumbuk will continue to be a beacon of strength and progress.

To give a bit of background on Nirrumbuk, it started off as a community development program organisation back in 1993. Full credit to the board of directors and members—they decided that they needed to sustain themselves because CDP was not going to cut it and the money was not always going to be there. They put a lot of work into starting up a few businesses that did not make it, but that did not stop Nirrumbuk from establishing businesses and keeping the organisation going. There are many people who play a big part in the organisation. The membership consists of 10 member groups to whom the organisation provides financial support to build their capacity and their little communities up on the peninsula.

It is the only organisation in Broome that is sustainable. It supports and provides help for everyone. It is not only for Aboriginal people either. That is one thing about Nirrumbuk: it is not attached to any native title group. That makes it such a better organisation to be in. There are no political obstacles in the way for it to move forward. It is just a bunch of 10 people who decided to take ownership of the organisation and build it to where it is today.

I take this opportunity to congratulate everyone who has been a part of Nirrumbuk's incredible journey: their board, their elders, their members, their staff and their partners and supporters. People have been dedicated to ensuring Nirrumbuk thrives. May its journey continue to provide help and opportunity to Broome and the surrounding communities. I want to mention the CEO, Joe Grande; the chairperson, Louie Bin Maarus; and Raymond Christophers. Gee, I could go on and on, but I will not; I will name only three people.

For me, my personal thing with Nirrumbuk is that I have been involved with the organisation since the day it started. That is 30 years of my life with Nirrumbuk. Prior to becoming a member of Parliament I was the chairperson for 10 years. I had to give that up to become a member, which was really a big stepping stone for me on my personal journey. The board are the people who make the organisation work and there is no other organisation in Broome that is as sustainable. They are visionary people who just want to keep on making Nirrumbuk a bigger organisation. Thank you, guys.

Members: Hear, hear!