



REGISTRAR COMMENCES PROCEEDINGS IN WA AGAINST FORMER CORPORATION EXECUTIVES

The Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, Mr Anthony Beven, has commenced proceedings in the Federal Court in Perth against two former officers of the Murchison Region Aboriginal Corporation (MRAC).

MRAC is a charitable corporation based in Geraldton, Western Australia. It provides affordable housing to Aboriginal people in the Murchison and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. It is registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act).

The Registrar alleges that MRAC's former executive officer, Mr Ashley Taylor, and former finance officer, Mr Abul Shahid, contravened their duties as officers of the corporation under the CATSI Act. Mr Taylor and Mr Shahid were employed by MRAC from 2002 until 2014.

Over a four year period to November 2014, the Registrar alleges that Mr Taylor and Mr Shahid made significant payments to themselves from MRAC's funds for their own personal benefit. Mr Taylor is alleged to have received 107 payments totalling \$211,612.41, repaid \$29,085 and still owes \$182,527.41 to MRAC. Mr Shahid is alleged to owe MRAC \$217,956.75 after he received 117 payments totalling \$1,381,413.55 and repaid \$1,163,456.75.

The payments were not approved by the directors of MRAC.

In July 2015, the Registrar successfully obtained interim orders in the Federal Court to freeze the assets of the two men when the payments first came to light. The orders were vacated in February 2016.

'The objective of charitable Aboriginal corporations is to benefit disadvantaged Aboriginal people,' Mr Beven said. 'It is not acceptable for senior officers to use charitable funds for their own personal purposes.'

The proceedings have been set down for a first case management hearing on Tuesday, 18 July 2017.

Background

See the Registrar's previous media release—*Registrar obtains freezing orders* (MR1516-01), 3 July 2015.

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