



FRESH START FOR COOLGAREE AS SPECIAL ADMINISTRATION ENDS

The Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, Mr Anthony Beven, today announced the end of the special administration at Coolgaree Aboriginal Corporation. Mr Beven appointed Mr Alan Eldridge from Australian Indigenous Business Services (AIBS) as the special administrator on 19 October 2012.

The corporation, located on Palm Island off the northern coast of Queensland, is one of the island's largest employers. For many years it has managed the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program and it also owns several small businesses.

By its own admission the corporation had for some time struggled financially and was in need of structural reform. With the phasing out of the CDEP program and the introduction of its replacement—the Remote Jobs and Community Program (RJCP)—its future looked uncertain.

‘The main aim of the special administration has been to strengthen the corporation and, above all, make it competitive. For the sake of the people of Palm Island winning the contract to deliver services under RJCP has been a major concern,’ Mr Beven said. ‘With the help provided by the special administrator and his team, I am pleased to say we have achieved a successful outcome on both counts.’

From today (1 July 2013) Coolgaree will deliver services under the RJCP in a joint venture with the Palm Island Community Company Limited and Campbell Page Limited.

Over the six-month special administration a number of efficiencies and improvements at the corporation have been achieved. These include:

- a review and restructure of staffing requirements
- continued engagement of the acting CEO, Mr Mark Clayden, to manage the delivery of services under the RJCP and daily business operations until the appointment of a permanent CEO
- a restructure of business operations and the development of business plans for its small businesses—namely, the service station, mechanical workshop and the bakery/take away
- changes to the rule book to strengthen Coolgaree's corporate governance framework.

‘Mr Eldridge worked closely with all stakeholders to strengthen the corporation's operating framework and financial position,’ Mr Beven said. ‘Coolgaree is now in a better position to continue its good work on Palm Island.’

The special administrator appointed a new board of directors made up of five members and one non-member. The new directors are: Mr Victor Daisy, Ms Winifred Obah, Ms Luella Bligh, Ms Lynette Freckleton, Mr Raymond Sibley and Ms Rachel Atkinson (non-member director).

‘The end of the special administration marks a fresh start for Coolgaree,’ said Mr Beven. ‘My office will continue to monitor the corporation closely over the next 12 months and offer assistance where necessary. We will also provide corporate governance training for the new directors.’

Background

For more information please see the Registrar’s media releases of 19 October 2012 (ORIC MR1213-13) and 3 May 2013 (ORIC MR1213-31).

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