REVITALISED HEALTH SERVICE RETURNED TO MEMBERS

The Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, Selwyn Button, has today announced the end of the special administration of Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre (Biripi).

Biripi was established in 1981 in Taree, New South Wales. By 2017–18 its income was $17.7 million. Of that, more than $13 million was from government sources, to deliver important services to the local community: clinical health, aged care, community support programs and maternal health care. It also provides out-of-home care for approximately 100 Aboriginal children in and around Taree and Inverell.

In August 2018 the Registrar authorised an independent examination of the corporation’s books. The examination revealed serious problems with the standard of corporate governance, which were compromising the corporation’s vital services. Many of Biripi’s stakeholders and funding bodies expressed grave concerns to the Registrar about the operations and standard of corporate governance of Biripi.

The Registrar acknowledged that the corporation was in crisis and needed help: ‘Sixteen senior staff had lodged WorkCover claims for stress related injuries; many positions were vacant; there was a significant underspend of government funding due to under-delivery of services; former directors had terminated two CEOs in a short space of time; and critical services such as primary health care, aged care and dental services had no senior management oversight’.

Six months after his appointment, the special administrator has completely restructured the corporation. Previously, over 30 people reported to one manager. Under the new structure, no manager has more than seven direct reports. The special administrator has also recruited a skills-based board of directors and a CEO with good experience in Aboriginal health.

Mr Button said ‘Biripi’s special administration was a best-practice effort. As well as resolving the governance crisis, there are already signs that the community’s pride in this significant Aboriginal health service is returning. I’m very happy to proclaim that Biripi is back in Aboriginal hands’.

The Registrar’s office will monitor Biripi over the next 12 months and offer governance training for the new directors.

Background

See also the previous media release, ‘Governance vitals poor at NSW Aboriginal health service’, 22 October 2018 (ORIC MR1819-04)

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ORIC MR1819-13
26 April 2019