



Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

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MEDIA RELEASE: APY recognised for extraordinary achievement in COVID-19 response

For immediate release

APY's governing body and its administration team have been recognised for their extraordinary service and achievement during the COVID-19 response and recovery with an award from the Premier of South Australia.

The APY Executive Board and lead administrators Richard and Tania King are recipients of the Premier's COVID-19 Safe Aboriginal Community Leadership Awards. The awards recognise Aboriginal communities and leaders for keeping their communities safe from the spread of COVID-19.

This followed a request from Prime Minister Scott Morrison for Premiers and Chief Ministers to identify outstanding achievements and contributions for work on the COVID-19 response and recovery in all states and territories.

Mr King, in his capacity as APY general manager and in co-ordination with the APY Executive Board, was the first Aboriginal leader in the country to close the borders of Indigenous lands to safeguard local people. He worked around-the-clock with community stores, local councils and emergency management teams to ensure a smooth transition and recovery.

The APY Lands were ultimately among nine remote areas in South Australia that were early last year declared Designated Areas under the Biosecurity Act, which imposed strict restrictions on entry.

During this challenging time, at the height of the COVID-19 crisis, Mr King and APY's Manager of Stakeholder Engagement, Tania King, were nominated as Local Community Contacts for all Designated Areas. They worked tirelessly with identified SA Police representatives designated as Regional Decision Makers to ensure the safety of vulnerable Indigenous groups on the APY Lands.

Nerida Saunders, executive director of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, acknowledged APY's "significant contribution to keeping our South Australian Aboriginal communities safe".

"On behalf of the team here at Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, thank you again for your commitment to community and strong leadership during one of the most difficult years our State has seen in recent times," Ms Sanders said.

The Prime Minister agreed that the once in a 100-year pandemic had seen an extraordinary period of service for Australia, with many people displaying courage and selflessness during the course of COVID-19.

"The pandemic has challenged our nation in a way we have not seen since World War II, yet we have seen the best of Australia as we have come together, helping one another to keep us safe," Mr Morrison said.

Mr King thanked South Australian Premier Steven Marshall for supporting the responsible steps undertaken by APY Administration and the Executive Board to keep remote Aboriginal communities free of COVID-19.

Mr King said communities on the APY Lands remained particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 because of well-documented poor health and living conditions.

“We need to remain vigilant and follow health guidelines in order to protect Anangu from this virus,” Mr King said.

“We look forward to working with health authorities in coming months to ensure the smooth rollout of phase 1b of the state’s coronavirus vaccine in the APY Lands.”

For further information or images please contact:

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APY Executive Board members with APY General Manager Richard King, front centre. The Award is being held by Acting Chairperson Richard Kanari from Pipalyatjara.

