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From: Skene, Kathleen [mailto:kathleen.skene@townsvillebulletin.com.au]
Sent: Friday, 10 June 2011 3:02 PM
To: THWAITES, Kate
Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

16/06/2011

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Hi Kate,

I was hoping you could help me find some information about another Townsville Indigenous organisation - [REDACTED]. Below is an article, written based on public records, which we published on May 11. I have also pasted several related stories, published since we last emailed, for your information.

5. On May 11, Federal Member for Herbert Ewen Jones referred to these long-running concerns in parliament. (Page 124 <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/rep/dailys/dr110511.pdf>) What is Ms Macklin's response to his claims, particularly his call for a thorough audit of Townsville's Indigenous organisations?

I am writing an article for tomorrow's edition, so it would be great to get a response by 4.30pm, though I realise it's a short notice for this sort of information, so I will include it in a follow-up early next week if required.

Thanks for your help.

Cheers,
Kathleen

Townsville Bulletin, Edition 1 -

WED 11 MAY 2011, Page 001

Charity begins at home Indigenous funds row deepens

By: Kathleen Skene

A COMPANY set up as a charity for Indigenous housing is providing homes for members of its board and their family.

Public records show a Kirwan home owned by the ABIS Community Co-operative Society is occupied by one of its directors, Angie Akee.

Ms Akee's sister Agnes Taplin is the chairwoman of the society, which receives generous tax breaks through its registration as a charitable institution.

Homes occupied by another of Ms Akee's sisters, Sandra Santo, and another director, Mamam Martin, are also owned by ABIS.

Names of the ABIS directors were obtained from the Office of Fair Trading, their addresses through the electoral roll and the property ownership through an online database. Among the directors named in the Fair Trading records are two women, believed to be Ms Akee's aunts, one of her Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Services workmates and one deceased man, who is listed twice as a director. Ms Akee's involvement with a number of Indigenous organisations was questioned in a special report in Saturday's Townsville Bulletin. She is in a \$120,000-a-year paid position with TAIHS.

Her sister, Ms Santo, is a director on the TAIHS board.

Yesterday, Ms Akee did not want to answer or even hear the claims, saying she did not need to defend herself as she had done nothing wrong.

"I'm not prepared to make any more statements about me," she said.

"These people running off to (Herbert MP Ewen) Jones you need to question them about their actions.

"What are they doing about homelessness in our community, deaths in custody and the health and education of our people?"

Townsville City Council community safety committee chairman Dale Last, who has been working on possible solutions for homelessness in the city, said the revelations were disappointing.

"You would like to think that all the relevant government organisations and authorities set up to deal with these issues are generally working towards providing accommodation," he said. "It disappoints me to hear stories such as this when there are so many people working so hard to solve these particular problems.

"There's an extraordinary amount of money that gets spent on these particular issues in this city and we really have to question whether there is any headway being made in terms of addressing these problems, and situations such as this certainly don't help."

Speaking about co-operative societies in general, local lawyer Evan Sarinas said providing private

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benefits clashed with societies' registration as a charitable institution.
 "It is incongruous for a charity's objects to provide for private benefits," he said.
 Australian Government records show that ABIS is exempt from income tax, receives a rebate on Fringe Benefits Tax and a concession on GST.
 An Australian Taxation Office spokesman yesterday said the status of charitable entities could be reviewed, with their status revoked and tax concessions repaid if necessary.
 "Where an entity is no longer considered to be charitable it is no longer entitled to charitable tax concessions and standard business taxes would apply," he said.
 "This action could also be retrospective where an entity is found to have not been a charity for a period of time.
 "The ATO grants charitable status . . . and certain elements, such as being not-for-profit and not making distributions to members must be clearly included.
 "If the organisations is incorporated it may be subject to further legal activity for acting contrary to the terms of its incorporation which may take place at the state or territory level."
 kathleen.skene@townsvillebulletin.com.au



Townsville Bulletin, Edition 1

FRI 20 MAY 2011, Page 007

Money 'goes missing' Aboriginal funds probe

By: Kathleen Skene

TWO Townsville Indigenous organisations have come under scrutiny, with one ordered to fix 18 breaches and another under investigation for hundreds of thousands of dollars in missing funds.
 Both have directors from the same family accused earlier this month of nepotism and mismanagement in the Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Services and ABIS Community Co-operative Society.
 The family has denied the claims, which were referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission last week.
 A compulsory examination of the Queensland Health-funded Twin Cities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation (Aged Care) was carried out by the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations last month.
 It came after two consecutive audits found hundreds of thousands of dollars had not been accounted for.
 According to public financial statements for 2007-08, more than \$72,000 in spending was unaccounted for, and more than \$50,000 had been moved to wage accounts but never put through the payroll system. The 2008-09 statements found more than \$145,000 could not be accounted for.
 For both years, the auditors found funds had been removed via cheques made out to cash in amounts between \$1000 and \$5000, apart from one mystery cheque for more than \$29,000 in 2007.
 The result of the examination is likely to be published next week.
 After an examination in 2008, the Indigenous corporations registrar issued the Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Women a compliance notice, outlining 18 breaches including an improperly maintained member list.
 The women's corporation is funded by Disability Services Queensland, the federal Department of Health and Ageing and the federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to provide Home and Community Care Services to Indigenous elders and people with disabilities. The registrar's office found annual general meetings were not being held according to the corporation's rules, minutes were not being kept, a director had been appointed without first being a member of the organisation and there was no record of them being properly elected.
 Aboriginal health services' director of operational services Angie Akee along with six close relatives is named as a director of the Women's corporation, and documents show that 24 of the organisation's 29 registered members are also family members.
 The organisation wrote to clients in March, saying services would be cut because of funding restraints from the extra workload caused by Cyclone Yasi.
 kathleen.skene@townsvillebulletin.com.au



Townsville Bulletin, Edition 1

THU 12 MAY 2011, Page 101

State Government intervenes CMC to probe Akee family

By: Kathleen Skene

THE Crime and Misconduct Commission will investigate serious claims of nepotism, rotting and board-stacking at the highest levels of Townsville's top indigenous organisations.
 Townsville MP Mandy Johnstone, pictured, yesterday referred claims of mismanagement and nepotism to the commission, saying it was the only body properly equipped to "get to the bottom of this". The development came as Herbert MP Ewen Jones told Federal Parliament that administrators must be appointed to investigate the long-held suspicions of rotting and board stacking.
 At the centre of the claims is Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Services director of operational services Angie Akee, along with her direct and extended family, who hold controlling positions in up to nine indigenous organisations.
 Ms Akee has strongly denied the claims.
 Among the organisations in question is the ABIS Community Co-operative Society, an indigenous housing body of which Ms Akee is a director. The Bulletin revealed she, and two other directors, each occupy homes owned by the company which is registered as a charity.
 Since publishing the initial claims on Saturday, the Townsville Bulletin has been contacted by many more people who claim to have knowledge of inappropriate behaviour by the family.
 Ms Johnstone, who was reluctant to speak directly about TAIHS earlier this week, yesterday took the claims to the CMC and called for an investigation to finalise them, one way or another.
 "This is about mothers, babies and their families. It's about their safety, their health and hope for their future," she said.
 "In the interests of all involved, I have forwarded these serious allegations to the CMC for their immediate attention."

"Over the years, (TAHS) has been an absolutely wonderful organisation so we need to put these matters to rest either way and let the CMQ do their job."

In Federal Parliament, Mr Jones said he had been "besieged" by people demanding action on the long-running suspicions.

"I have received reports of nepotism, bullying, roting of funding and allowances, and board stacking across the Aboriginal and Islander bodies in Townsville," he said.

"I have come to the conclusion that this government is totally aware of what is going on in this organisation and others where this family has influence and has deliberately chosen to do nothing.

"They already know that these organisations are rife with questionable corporate governance and lack financial accountability.

"The Government simply lacks the political will to address this major concern."

Mr Jones told parliament the Government did "not care about the overall health of our first Australians, or that the funds meant for their well-being are being misused".

"This government and Minister Macklin stand condemned by their lack of action here," he said.

"It has taken a group of Aboriginals and Islanders to stand up and fight for what is right. These people have the courage to stand up against the might of this government and the financial muscle of this organisation. Despite knowing this government does not care, they still come forward with their stories in the hope that something will be done."

Mr Jones said administrators should be immediately appointed.

"If this government is serious about accountability, it will instigate a forensic audit of this organisation and all organisations influenced by this family," he said.

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Kathleen Skene

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From: THWAITES, Kate [mailto:Kate.THWAITES@fahcsia.gov.au]
 Sent: Monday, 9 May 2011 2:57 PM
 To: Skene, Kathleen
 Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Kathleen,

As the response indicates, all the allegations the Department has received have been investigated. There are measures in place to ensure funding accountability and there is a complaints mechanism whereby people can raise their further concerns with the Department.

Cheers,

Kate

Kate Thwaites
 Media Adviser
 Jenny Macklin MP
 Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
 and Indigenous Affairs
 t: 02 6277 7560

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From: Skene, Kathleen [mailto:kathleen.skene@townsvillebulletin.com.au]
 Sent: Monday, 9 May 2011 2:10 PM
 To: THWAITES, Kate
 Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Kate,

I did use part of it, in this article, http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/article/2011/05/07/229081_news.html

"Former Herbert MP Peter Lindsay brought the claims to Federal Parliament in 2006, mentioning Angle Akee by name and accusing her and her family of "nepotism, roting, misuse of public money, and a lack of ethical behaviour".

Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin's office yesterday confirmed an investigation of four government department(s) conducted following Mr Lindsay's claims had not resulted in further action."

As you can see, there was a lot of information to fit into the spread, and we are planning to run a follow-up in tomorrow's paper with more detailed responses from Ministers involved in funding the organisations, which is why I was hoping to speak to Ms Macklin. I realise it's Budget

16/06/2011

day, but it would only take a few minutes.

It would even be good if I could get a statement from her answering the question I asked last week: 'Will the Minister seek (or support) a co-ordinated and concurrent investigation into the operations of all the above organisations in an effort to ensure public resources are being effectively used?'

Thanks again for your help.

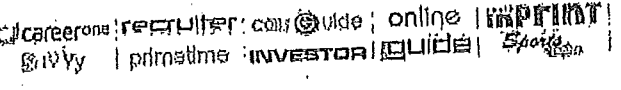
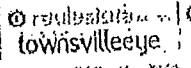
Regards,

Kathleen Skene | Journalist

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From: THWAITES, Kate [mailto:Kate.THWAITES@fahcsia.gov.au]
Sent: Monday, 9 May 2011 2:01 PM
To: Skene, Kathleen
Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Kathleen,

Thanks for the link. You don't seem to have included any of the response we provided?

Cheers,

Kate

Kate Thwaites
Media Adviser
Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs
t. 02 6277 7560

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From: Skene, Kathleen [mailto:kathleen.skene@townsvillebulletin.com.au]
Sent: Monday, 9 May 2011 12:14 PM
To: THWAITES, Kate
Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Kate,

Hope you enjoyed your weekend, and that Budget week is not giving you too many headaches!

Thanks for your help last week. Here's a link to the resulting stories
http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/article/2011/05/07/229021_news.html

I would still like to speak directly to Ms Macklin about this issue – is she still overseas? Is she out of phone contact?

Cheers,

Kathleen Skene | Journalist

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16/06/2011

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From: THWAITES, Kate [mailto:Kate.THWAITES@fhcsia.gov.au]
 Sent: Friday, 6 May 2011 3:19 PM
 To: Skene, Kathleen
 Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Kathleen,

Please find response to your questions below, Thanks, Kate

Please attribute to a spokesperson for the Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin

Minister Macklin referred Mr Lindsay's complaints to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' (FaHCSIA) Indigenous Programs Investigation Branch for further investigation in 2008.

This investigation included consultation with Mr Lindsay and the three Australian Government Departments that provided the majority of the funding to the four organisations he specifically mentioned.

This investigation determined that there were no criminal or civil matters disclosed that would warrant further investigation by FaHCSIA.

The Department is not aware of any current allegations of mismanagement relating to Townsville based Indigenous organisations.

The Australian Government has strict measures in place to ensure funding accountability and has the ability to take action if there is alleged impropriety.

Organisations funded by the Australian Government are issued with performance-based and legally enforceable funding agreements which set out the terms and conditions governing a business relationship.

FaHCSIA also has a complaints management process whereby any member of the public can lodge a concern about a FaHCSIA funded service providers, including the reporting of suspected fraud.

If the service provider is not funded by FaHCSIA, the complainant would be referred to the appropriate Department/Agency for action

Kate Thwaites
 Media Adviser
 Jenny Macklin MP
 Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
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From: Skene, Kathleen [mailto:kathleen.skene@townsvillebulletin.com.au]
 Sent: Thursday, 5 May 2011 5:28 PM
 To: THWAITES, Kate
 Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

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Hi Kate,

Sure, tomorrow morning will be fine.

If it helps with your searching, I have some ICN/ABNs and registered names for some of the organisations. [redacted]
 [redacted] Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Services
 Limited ABN 66 010 113 603; [redacted]

I am particularly keen to get an answer from Ms Macklin to my fifth question:

*Some of these organisations are Aboriginal Corporations, under the jurisdiction of the Corporations Act (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) 2006, and some, like TAIHS, are companies under the jurisdiction of ASIC. Former staff of the organisations claim that money is moved between the groups (by shared board members) whenever one of the organisations is audited, making

16/06/2011

detection of any anomalies unlikely. Will the Minister seek a co-ordinated and concurrent investigation into the operations of all the above organisations in an effort to ensure public resources are being effectively used?

I'm still more than happy to speak with Ms Macklin by phone – it would only take 10 minutes at the most and would save you being the middle woman. Is she somewhere with no mobile reception?

Cheers,

Kathleen Skene | Journalist

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From: THWAITES, Kate [mailto:Kate.THWAITES@ahcsia.gov.au]
Sent: Thursday, 5 May 2011 5:06 PM
To: Skene, Kathleen
Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Kathleen,

Sorry – things have been flat out with budget here.

Are you able to hold until tomorrow – apologies it's taken a bit longer than I anticipated.

Cheers,

Kate

Kate Thwaites
Media Adviser
Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs
t. 02 6277 7560

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From: Skene, Kathleen [mailto:kathleen.skene@townsvillebulletin.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, 5 May 2011 5:01 PM
To: THWAITES, Kate
Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Kate,

How are you going with this inquiry?

Cheers,

Kathleen Skene | Journalist

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From: THWAITES, Kate [mailto:Kate.THWAITES@fahcsia.gov.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 3 May 2011 1:22 PM
To: Skene, Kathleen
Cc: BELL, Keely
Subject: RE: Indigenous services in Townsville [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Kathleen,

I'm one of Minister Macklin's media advisers – Sandi has passed your inquiry onto me.

The Minister is currently overseas and so not available for interview.

Can you please send me specific questions you'd like answered and I can get you a response.

What is your deadline?

Kind regards,

Kate

Kate Thwaites
 Media Adviser
 Jenny Macklin MP
 Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
 and Indigenous Affairs
 t. 02 6277 7560

irrelevant material s22

From: Skene, Kathleen [mailto:kathleen.skene@townsvillebulletin.com.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 3 May 2011 11:17 AM
To: GATT, Sandi
Subject: Indigenous services in Townsville

Hi Sandi,

I would like to make a time to speak to Ms Macklin at her earliest convenience about serious and long-running claims of mismanagement in some of Townsville's Indigenous organisations.

By way of background, the organisations involved all share board members and directors, who are composed largely of members of one local family.

Former Federal Member for Herbert Peter Lindsay mentioned this issue before the House of Representatives on June 24, 2008 <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/rep/dailys/dr240608.pdf> and wrote to Ms Macklin the following day requesting an open and detailed inquiry into the administration of four Townsville-based organisations. Current MP for Herbert Ewen Jones claims the office never received a reply to this letter or the parliamentary mention.

There have been numerous claims from the community, including former doctors and other staff of these organisations, of bullying and the misappropriation of funds and resources, which, they claim, have lead to reduced services for the significant and disadvantaged Aboriginal and Islander community in North Queensland.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this important issue with Ms Macklin soon.

Thanks for your time.

16/06/2011

Regards,

Kathleen Skene | Journalist

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