

A. Entity responses

As mandated in section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to:

- the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (Department of State Development)
- the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the Department of Tourism)
- Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC).

This appendix contains their detailed responses to our audit recommendations.

The heads of these entities are responsible for the accuracy, fairness, and balance of their comments.

While we did not audit QYAC, or make recommendations to it, this report comments directly on funding provided to it and its engagement with the public sector entities responsible for the funding. Accordingly, we assessed QYAC to be an entity with a special interest in the report under s. 64(2) of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*. On this basis, we gave QYAC a copy of this report for its information and provided it with an opportunity to comment.



Comments received from Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations



The Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning
Minister for Industrial Relations

Our ref: MC25/1817

24 April 2025

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
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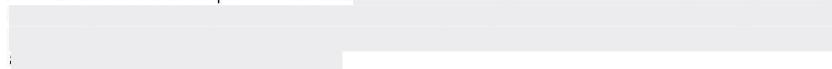
Dear Ms Vagg

Thank you for your email of 31 March 2025 providing the draft Queensland Audit Office (QAO) report, Managing Minjerribah Futures Funding.

I am informed that my Director-General, Mr John Sosso of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (the Department) is providing the QAO with a detailed Departmental response.

The Department thanks the QAO for an early review of the report and its recommendations and findings. The Department has had a program of work in place to strengthen funding agreements, reporting and governance against which the report's recommendations will be considered.

For further information please contact



Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jarrod Bleijie".

JARROD BLEIJIE MP
DEPUTY PREMIER
Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning
Minister for Industrial Relations

Comments received from Director-General, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning



Queensland
Government
Department of
**State Development,
Infrastructure and Planning**

Our ref: MC25/1817

Your ref: PRJ04649

24 April 2025

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
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Dear Ms Vagg

Thank you for your email of 31 March 2025 regarding the proposed Queensland audit report on *Managing Minjerribah Futures funding*. A detailed agency response is attached.

The former Department of State Development, Manufacturing and Infrastructure and Planning (DSDMIP) had lead responsibility for the implementation of the *North Stradbroke Island Economic Transition Strategy* (the transition strategy) from September 2016 to September 2018 before administrative responsibility was transferred to the former Department of Innovation, Tourism, Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games.

Under the stewardship of the former DSDMIP, an Implementation Committee consisting of key Government agencies, Local Government, the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC), the University of Queensland and the Chamber of Commerce was established to oversee project implementation.

The former DSDMIP ensured regular reporting to Cabinet and developed an annual report to ensure transparency in public reporting on the status of projects.

The Department thanks the Queensland Audit Office for its subsequent findings and recommendations, with the Department now implementing measures to consider and strengthen funding agreements, reporting and governance.

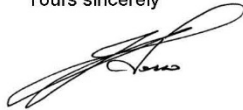
My Department has implemented a program of work to address the recommendations from the audit report, *Improving Grants Management Report 2: 2022-23*. This program of work will continue to be refined and improved over time, including in considerations of *Managing Minjerribah Futures funding* findings and recommendations.

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Yours sincerely



John Soso
Director-General

Enc

Responses to recommendations

Queensland Audit Office *Managing Minjerribah Futures funding report*

Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDIP) response

Project leads and funding arrangements

The former Department of State Development, Manufacturing and Infrastructure and Planning (DSDMIP) led implementation of the *North Stradbroke Island Economic Strategy* (the transition strategy) from September 2016 to September 2018.

Transition strategy projects and projects leads were determined after extensive consultation with stakeholders including the Registered Native Title Body Corporate, the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC).

The final project list and project leads were determined by Cabinet, rather than officers of the former DSDMIP as referenced in the report.

As highlighted in the report, QYAC was the project coordinator for nine of the original 23 projects, with departmental officers negotiating both project scopes and funding agreements and related documents for each project.

Given Cabinet approval of QYAC as project lead, the former DSDMIP identified ways to best work with QYAC including:

- funding agreements enabled QYAC to engage qualified professionals to manage projects (eligible expense)
- detailed discussions regarding expectations, outputs and timeframes prior to signing contracts
- parties accessing legal support to review documentation prior to contract execution.

The former DSDMIP prepared all necessary project management documents, risk registers, project scopes, funding agreements and governance frameworks, and all transition strategy projects were managed in the same manner (copies previously provided to the QAO).

Funding agreements drafted by the former DSDMIP clearly identified the responsibilities of all parties, including reporting and payment requirements. It is also important to note that the former DSDMIP made payments on milestones achieved with supporting documentation meaning references on pages 12 and 14 are considered to not apply to the time DSDMIP was responsible for the program.

The former DSDMIP also ensured that funding agreements were suitably tailored to recognise QYAC's limited size, with consideration given to agreement reporting requirements. The Department in discussion with QYAC agreed that milestone reporting

was a suitable approach to ensure outcomes were achieved, noting copies of project scopes and funding agreements were provided to the QAO for review.

It is also important to note that QYAC supported including market analysis in the original funding agreements, as QYAC planned to seek private and Australian Government investment for several projects with detail of funds secured listed below:

- QYAC successfully negotiated \$2.5 million in funding from the Australian Government towards QUAMPI (Quandamooka Arts and Culture Centre)
- the former DSDMIP supported QYAC to secure \$1 million from the University of Queensland towards Yalingbila Mil Bibula (whale watching facility)
- the former DSDMIP negotiated an additional \$1.2 million from the Australian Government to support the Moopi Moopi Aged Care Facility upgrade project.

Transition Strategy Governance

Project governance and support during former DSDMIP lead role was strong, with all projects managed effectively as characterised by the following DSDMIP activities:

- prepared half-yearly reporting to Cabinet on the status of the implementation of projects
- prepared publicly available annual reports to ensure transparency on the implementation of projects
- established an Implementation Committee that included representatives of key state agencies, Local Government, QYAC, Straddie Chamber of Commerce and the University of Queensland
- established a shop front on Minjerribah with full-time staff who regularly provided in person support to QYAC and provided briefings and project updates to members of the public.

Response to Recommendations (actions 2-6) for the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDIP) to consider when establishing similar programs

Action 2 conducting market analysis for sourcing external funding where it is identified that the program will not be entirely funded by the Queensland Government

- DSDIP notes action 2 and will apply market analysis to future projects where relevant

Action 3 assessing the capacity and available skills of entities responsible for delivering multiple concurrent projects varying in nature, size, and complexity. They should also consider providing additional support, where required, through other government agencies that possess the necessary skills and expertise, such as the Department of Housing and Public Works

- DSDILP notes action 3

Action 4 *tailoring the terms and conditions of funding agreements to ensure that reporting and milestone requirements are appropriate and achievable for the receiving entity*

- DSDIP has implemented a program of work to address recommendations from the audit report, *Improving Grants Management Report 2: 2022-23*. This program supports capability uplift and a consistent approach to enhancing grants management across the Queensland Government. The work delivered will continue to be refined and improved over time, ensuring that learnings are applied when establishing new programs.

Action 5 *updating standard terms and conditions of funding agreements to clarify to funding recipients what type of expenditure is considered appropriate*

- DSDIP notes action 5 and as per response to action 4, the Department continues to refine and improve grants management in response to recommendations from the audit report, *Improving Grants Management Report 2: 2022-23*.

Action 6 *establishing appropriate governance arrangements that are consistently applied over the life of strategies, particularly where strategies are modified or impacted by machinery of government changes*

- DSDIP notes action 6 and will apply appropriate governance arrangements to future similar programs.

During the period the former DSDMIP managed the transition strategy, it demonstrated proficiency in managing funding agreements with QYAC, including comprehensive measures to establish clear, robust funding agreements. These agreements were designed to be transparent and aligned with the broader goals of the transition strategy. Clarity in these agreements ensured that parties had a mutual understanding of expectations, deliverables, and timelines.

A critical aspect of the former DSDMIP management was the continuous monitoring of the agreements. Regular audits, progress reports, and performance reviews were conducted to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreements. This proactive approach helped in identifying potential issues early and implementing corrective measures promptly.

The former DSDMIP ensured funding was used effectively for the intended activities. This included regular check-ins with QYAC to assess progress, offering support, and addressing challenges. By maintaining open communication and a collaborative spirit, the former DSDMIP facilitated the successful delivery of multiple transition strategy projects.

Comments received from Acting Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

Our Ref: CTS 07501/25



Department of the
**Environment, Tourism,
Science and Innovation**

24 April 2025

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Ms Vagg

I refer to an email of 31 March 2025 to Patricia O'Callaghan, Director-General of the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the department) regarding the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) proposed *Managing Minjerribah Futures funding* Report to Parliament. The Director-General has asked me to respond on her behalf.

I accept the assessment of the status of the seven recommendations on behalf of the department and wish to advise (page 10 of the Report) that the Quandamooka Art Museum and Performance Institute (officially known as the Quandamooka Arts and Culture Centre) reached construction completion in December 2024 and is now complete.

The department agrees with the recommendations provided by QAO and has provided detailed responses in the attached template provided by QAO.

In summary, the department commits to:

- updating its Minjerribah Futures program reporting, to the extent possible with the information available to the department;
- reviewing efforts to attract private investment to similar projects in future;
- reviewing delivery approaches and where applicable, engaging other Government departments to support the projects in a similar way to department's engagement of the Department of Housing and Public Works and specifically QBuild to support the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) in managing construction delivery for several Minjerribah Futures projects;
- applying its established Grants Management Framework to similar programs and implementing learnings from this QAO review; and
- ensuring suitable governance arrangements are in place for new programs of a similar nature.

Noting the unique nature of this program, if the department was required to establish similar programs in future, the department would review the learnings from this QAO review.

Should your officers require any further information, they may contact

[Redacted contact information]

Yours sincerely

Wietske Smith
**Acting Deputy Director-General
Corporate Services**

Encl. (1)

Page 1 of 1

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Responses to recommendations



Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

Managing Minjerribah Futures funding

Response to recommendations provided by the A/Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services, DETSI on 24 April 2025.

Recommendation	Agree/Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>1. We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation strengthens its public reporting on the current status of the Minjerribah Futures program by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reconciling the projects under the Minjerribah Futures program to the original projects under the North Stradbroke Island Economic Transition Strategy clearly identifying the status of all projects under the program, including any action required to complete them. reporting on funding provided to date against the total funding approved. <p>This reporting could be done either on the department's website or in its annual report.</p>	Agree	Quarter 3, 2025-26	<p>The department commits to updating its Minjerribah Futures program reporting, to the extent possible with the information available to the department.</p> <p>Noting the age of the program and its transfer across Government agencies through Machinery of Government Changes, it may not be possible for the Department to fully reconcile the current program administered by DETSI to the original transition strategy.</p> <p>It should also be noted that in addition to Queensland Government funding provided to the program, the Australian Government and Academia have also been contributed funding towards projects under Minjerribah Futures.</p>
<p>We recommend the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation and the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning use learnings from this program when establishing similar programs by:</p> <p>2. conducting market analysis for sourcing external funding where it is identified that the program will not be entirely funded by the Queensland Government</p>	Agree	As appropriate	<p>The Tourism Division's efforts to attract private investment to Minjerribah were unsuccessful. Potential investors did not view the island as investor ready.</p> <p>Noting the unique nature of this program, the Department, if it was required to establish similar programs, would review the learnings of the Minjerribah Futures program and the review recommendations for applicability to a new program.</p> <p>This would include estimating third party contributions, based on sound assumptions available for scrutiny by relevant agencies, such as the Queensland Treasury, and supported through evidence, such as documented market analysis with suitable expert advice as appropriate.</p>
<p>3. assessing the capacity and available skills of entities responsible for delivering multiple concurrent projects varying in nature, size, and complexity. They should also consider providing additional support, where required, through other government agencies that possess the necessary skills and expertise, such as the Department of Housing and Public Works</p>	Agree	In place/implemented	<p>The Department of Housing and Public Works (QBuild) has been engaged in project managing the delivery of several Minjerribah Futures construction projects to support QYAC's capacity and expertise.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
4. tailoring the terms and conditions of funding agreements to ensure that reporting and milestone requirements are appropriate and achievable for the receiving entity	Agree	In place/ implemented	<p>The Tourism Division, DETSI inherited existing funding agreements/MoUs from another government agency in 2018/19 when the program was transitioned to the Tourism Division.</p> <p>A decision was taken to manage contract changes in existing agreements and MOU's through variations rather than reestablish completely new agreements. This decision was taken at the time to ensure program delivery continued without interruption.</p> <p>During this transition of programs to Tourism, program changes were implemented to improve delivery and acquittal processes. All current Grant Programs comply with the DETSI Grant Management Framework now in place.</p> <p>Noting the unique nature of this program, the Department commits to the required changes if it was required to establish similar programs. The appropriate learnings from the Minjerribah Futures program and the recommendations of this review would be considered for applicability to a new program. This would include considerations of fit for purpose agreements, terms and conditions and the nature of delivery vehicles.</p>
5. updating standard terms and conditions of funding agreements to clarify to funding recipients what type of expenditure is considered appropriate.	Agree	In place/ implemented	<p>DETSI has implemented changes to standard terms and conditions for funding agreements to clarify eligible/ineligible expenditure and commits to ongoing improvement.</p> <p>Noting the unique nature of this program, the department commits to review the learnings from the Minjerribah Futures program and the QAO review recommendations for applicability to new programs. This would include considerations of fit for purpose agreements, terms and conditions and the nature of delivery vehicles.</p>
6. establishing appropriate governance arrangements that are consistently applied over the life of strategies, particularly where strategies are modified or impacted by machinery of government changes.	Agree	In place/ implemented	<p>Note that governance arrangements have been in place, including the former Minjerribah Ministerial Forum (five Ministers) which existed and continued when the North Stradbroke Island Economic Transition Strategy (NSI ETS) transitioned from the then Department of State Development to Tourism, and then transitioned to a DGs Steering Committee with Ministerial advisors in attendance. Governance arrangements were modified to suit changed circumstances as the program progressed.</p>
7. We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation strengthens its funding acquittal processes for future projects by:	Agree	In place / implemented	<p>The recent Machinery-of-Government changes incorporating the Tourism division into DETSI, presents an opportunity for the department to align its processes and share learnings, particularly as the previous Department of Environment, Science and</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">reviewing whether its current acquittal processes are fit for purpose to ensure all funding provided is used in accordance with funding agreements.ensuring staged funding under future agreements is not paid until any earlier funding has been fully and properly acquitted, unless there are prevailing circumstances that are outlined in the agreements.			<p>Innovation has significant experience in managing programs and agreements with traditional owner/indigenous organisations.</p> <p>The Tourism Division is administering grants in compliance with the DETSI Grants Administration Framework. For future funding programs the department will review its acquittal processes to ensure they are fit for purpose, and ensure payments are made in line with those agreements.</p> <p>This is consistent with both the DETSI Grants Administration Framework and Queensland Treasury guidance in the Financial Accountability Handbook.</p>



Comments received from Acting Chief Executive Officer, Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation



Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

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Attention: Deputy Auditor General

By email: gao@gao.qld.gov.au

30 April 2025

Proposed report Managing Minjerribah Futures Funding

Thank you for your provision of the above proposed Audit Report to Parliament. Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) notes your findings regarding the design and management of the Economic Transition Strategy (ETS) and Minjerribah Future funding agreements with the Queensland State Government and how it could be improved in the future.

Through the ETS and Minjerribah Futures program, QYAC has learnt a great deal about working with government, and delivering multiple, complex projects in a short period of time. It has built QYAC's capacity and we have in place ISO quality assurance programs to ensure those learnings are maintained.

Status of projects and funding

QYAC is very grateful to have been the recipient of \$8.7 million in funding over the period 1 July 2016 to 21 December 2021, the period of the above Audit Report. QYAC notes that all of the projects other than Yalingbila Bibula (Whale on the Hill) project are now substantially complete. Yalingbila Bibula was delayed due to awaiting a Federal Government determination and is currently being redesigned and will be delivered on a smaller scale.

These projects resulted in an additional 25 jobs, over 80% of which have been filled by Quandamooka people working on their country. Quandamooka trained 10 Quandamooka Rangers who graduated within Certificates II and III in Conservation and Land Management and Aboriginal Land Management. A further 10 Quandamooka people were trained in Certificate II Business Development.

We also note that QYAC was successful in securing additional funding to supplement the Queensland Government's contributions to these projects. This money totalled \$3.5 million.

Applying the same multipliers that were used in the Minjerribah Futures program (and including the funding that QYAC was able to secure from other sources), the Queensland



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Government's investment during the relevant period (alongside the additional funding secured by QYAC) has contributed an additional \$37.82 million to the economy of North Stradbroke Island. This investment was necessary as the local economy transitioned from being reliant on mining activities and income.

Suitability of funding agreements

With hindsight, it is apparent that QYAC was inadequately resourced by the State to deliver the number of projects (some of which were large and complex) when the ETS commenced. At the time, QYAC was still a relatively new (and small) organisation with most of its employees focused on managing and caring for Quandamooka Country. QYAC required additional project management support that was ultimately provided with the introduction of the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW). The funding agreements were not tailored for QYAC and placed a significant reporting burden on the organisation. Despite this (and as noted above) all but one of the projects are now substantially complete.

The case study identified by the Audit Office – the development and upgrade of the Minjerribah camping grounds – highlights the lack of clarity and specificity in the funding agreements and the challenges that this creates for both reporting and the administration of the funds from QYAC's perspective. For example, without an agreed hourly rate specified in the funding agreement, QYAC relied on rates it had previously agreed with another Queensland Government agency. An alternative which would provide the Government and funded bodied with greater certainty and simplify budgeting and acquittal processes would be to formally adopt a 'project management and administration' fee (calculated as a percentage of the grant funding).

As noted in the case study, despite some non-compliance, the project was regarded as delivering successful outcomes. QYAC points a significant uplift in revenue (circa 40%) that can be attributed to the \$2.27 million investment in the Minjerribah Camping upgrades including the first disability friendly camping accommodation on Minjerribah, 9 eco-tents, 20 glamping tents and over 200 camp site upgrades allowing for site-based bookings and less conflict during peak camping periods of Easter and Christmas. In 2019, Minjerribah Camping was received the Qantas Award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism – Silver Award after this investment. The new infrastructure has also supported additional school visits, and outdoor and cultural education for these students.

Governance over the program

QYAC participated in the Queensland Government's governance structures in their various forms and found the regular meetings useful for keeping the projects on track and raising at an early stage the emerging issues. One of QYAC's key learnings through this process is that there was often a flurry of activity by some agencies immediately prior to the next meeting and it would have benefited in an agency level support role for delivery progress between the meetings.



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QYAC notes that many of the Queensland Government agencies involved in the Economic Transition Strategy and Minjerribah Futures program had not delivered on ground projects previously, and as such their project management capacity is also worthy of assessment prior to delivering future programs.

Other Comments:

Balance

QYAC queries whether the Audit Report could have benefitted from an analysis of arrangements with other project leads in the delivery of the Economic Transition Strategy projects, such as the Redlands City Council, and North Stradbroke Island Chamber of Commerce. This would improve the coverage of the Report and avoid the risk of it being perceived as overly focused on QYAC-led projects which were only 9 of the 23 projects. QYAC notes that feedback is likely to apply equally to those 12 projects and would present a more balanced picture of performance.

Delays

QYAC notes that the continual revision of funding available, and therefore the design and scope of the projects which were being funded, led to much delay, as quantity surveyors would need to be engaged and project agreements renegotiated. After the announcement of Minjerribah Futures in 2019, the COVID -19 pandemic and associated lockdowns and health controls had a much larger impact on project delays than is stated in the report. The associated global supply chain impacts and unprecedented increases in the cost of construction materials created further challenges and required rescoping and repricing of the projects.

Projects and Outcomes

Finally, QYAC notes that the Economic Transition Strategy/ Minjerribah Futures projects that have been delivered with the support of the Queensland Government have delivered real and lasting benefits for the Quandamooka People, but also the broader Minjerribah community and the public. Using the same multipliers that were used in the Minjerribah Futures program, the projects in their final state (fully funded) are estimated to have created an additional flow-on of in excess of \$100 million to the economy of North Stradbroke Island, a remote area. The funding provided during the audited period supported (to date) 25 new positions of which 20 provide ongoing employment for Aboriginal people on Minjerribah. Additional roles have been created with the completion of the larger Minjerribah Futures projects since 2021.



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While the reference to ‘tents’ in the chosen case study as part of the infrastructure delivered through Minjerribah Futures is accurate, it does not do justice to the uplift in the standard of accommodation offerings now provided by Minjerribah Camping. Since the glamping tents were able to be occupied, occupancy rates have increased and have attracted a whole new range of Minjerribah Camping customers. It was particularly successful during COVID 19 when people were unable to travel internationally.

The refurbishment of the Dunwich Secondary School campus into the QYAC main site – Ganaba – provides the organisation with a home base as well as opportunities to host conferences and functions, run training courses for its members and the broader community, and cater for internal and external functions. It currently also houses the Minjerribah Camping team, including the office the public use when checking in, and has space to host further social enterprises in the future.

The Recreation Trails (walking and cycling) are well-utilised and create opportunities for tourists and locals alike to move across the island. The upgrade of existing trails, and development of new ones, have provided tourism and employment opportunities, both throughout the construction phase and in the operation and maintenance of the new and improved trails. They also encourage new and repeat visitation to Minjerribah.

The Place-based Markers provided the first township-based acknowledgement of the beauty and strength of Quandamooka culture, and its close relationship with their totemic creatures, and their Country.

And the jewel in the crown is QUAMPI, which is now complete and will open to the public in late winter/ early spring of 2025. QUAMPI will become the heart of Quandamooka’s thriving arts and culture offering, with a gallery space of ‘regional gallery’ standard, performance areas, an Elders’ gathering area and food and beverage offerings. The proximity of QUAMPI to Brisbane and Redlands will make it a sought-after venue for functions (weddings, cocktail parties etc) and it will also be an integral and integrated part of the annual Quandamooka Festival.

QUAMPI will also be South East Queensland’s only First Nations cultural centre and an important part of our visual arts ecology. While not yet operational, it is anticipated that QUAMPI will be financially self-sustaining within 3 years and become a revenue generator beyond that.

Conclusion

QYAC is very pleased to have worked with so many of the Queensland Government agencies in delivering the outcomes of the Minjerribah Futures Funding on Minjerribah.

Notwithstanding the learnings identified in the Audit Report, the Queensland Government received excellent value for money from its investment. The Quandamooka People have a



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clear celebration of their contribution to Minjerribah economy and tourism which was previously lacking and have benefited from the investment in the island economy, as has the broader community.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Healy
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation