

Jabalbina misses out on funding for project

Dominic Geiger

A FAR Northern indigenous business plan aimed at creating 13 jobs is facing uncertainty after it was denied federal funding.

Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation had applied for a grant under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to support a "tourism and land management enterprise development between Port Douglas and Cooktown".

Key to the proposal was money for a manager to help the corporation better navigate the complexities of indigenous land use.

But the group recently received a letter saying funding wouldn't be approved.

Jabalbina chief executive and former Labor MP for Leichhardt Jim Turnour said employees were "struggling to understand" what more they needed to do to get government support.

"We applied in January and after three-and-a-half months waiting we get a bland letter that doesn't provide any reasoning as to why our application was rejected," he said.

"The government seems to



Jim Turnour of Jabalbina

be saying that tourism and land management businesses run by Aboriginal people between Port Douglas and Cooktown aren't going to be commercially viable, it's just ludicrous."

In the letter from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the corporation

was told applications were assessed on a variety of criteria, including "value for money for the Government's investment".

But Mr Turnour argued the corporation's own projections showed the proposal would "become profitable" after three years with the help of an enterprise manager.

"We have to negotiate development with traditional owners, deal with local, state and federal regulatory planning issues, secure finance and build the capacity of an Aboriginal workforce if the businesses are to be successful," he said.

"These additional barriers make support during the establishment phase critical to success.

"Jabalbina was seeking funding for an Enterprise Manager for three years to address these barriers and to set up and run these businesses.

"Financial projections for the businesses indicated they would create up to 13 new jobs."

Mr Turnour has requested a phone call with a department representative to better explain why the group was unsuccessful in its application.

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