



Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

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MEDIA RELEASE: Rescheduled Festival for 40th Anniversary of APY Land Rights Act postponed

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A festival to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the groundbreaking Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act has been postponed for a second time due to the ongoing health risks posed by the COVID-19 Omicron variant.

The APY Executive Board has made the difficult and disappointing decision to further delay the event that had already been rescheduled from October 2021 to April 2022. A decision on a new date for the festival is expected to be made in July 2022.

South Australian Premier Steven Marshall this week said he was very concerned for those in the APY Lands, including the 29 indigenous people in hospital and 3 in the Intensive Care Unit.

“That’s an over representation of indigenous people in our hospitals (with Covid),” Mr Marshall said, adding there were around 1000 active cases in the state’s indigenous communities.

The 40th anniversary festival would draw together the region’s population of 3000, along with artists and official guests from across the country, in a weekend of traditional and contemporary performances. The event would pay tribute to those who led the land rights campaign through the 1970s and reflect on the future of the land and its people.

On the day of the 40th anniversary, on 2 October 2021, indigenous leaders in the APY Lands said it was a special day for reflection.

The Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act 1981 (SA) remains unprecedented in Australian land rights history in that it granted inalienable freehold title to its traditional Aboriginal owners.

It did this by creating Anangu Pitjantjatjara (renamed Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara in 2005) as a statutory authority in which title of the land in the far north west of South Australia is vested.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara’s members are the traditional owners who determine, collectively, how the land is to be managed.

Funding support for the festival, provided by the state and federal governments, and corporate sponsors, remains in place.

APY Executive Board chairperson Bernard Singer said the risks of staging the festival in April remained high, with the impact of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic posing a severe risk to the health of all Anangu.

“We are very disappointed, but so far we have been able to keep COVID infections low by minimising travel between the major communities in the APY Lands,” Mr Singer said.

“Bringing thousands of people together at a festival in just eight or nine weeks’ time could undo that good work and jeopardise people's health and safety. We are especially concerned about the most vulnerable, including older people and all the children.”

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