



## INTERVIEW WITH CEO KARAN HAYWARD & CHAIRPERSON ROD WASON

### Papulu Apparr-Kari AC

The Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation, meaning the 'home of language', was established in 1987, with a focus on the preservation and promotion of Aboriginal languages. Based in Tennant Creek, PAK operates in a huge area from Tennant to Borroloola and all the way to Doomadgee in Queensland, west to the Western Australian border, and south to Aileron not far from Alice Springs. Karan originally came to the NT for just a short stay, but has been with PAK for 21 years and the CEO for 17 years. Rod has been on the board for 15 years, and Chairperson for the past five.

#### How many Aboriginal staff does PAK employ? What sorts of jobs are they employed in?

**Karan** - PAK currently employs 45 Aboriginal staff across the seven Barkly areas; in roles on the Parent and Community Engagement program, school attendance program, in the language and multimedia sections, administration and maintenance.

#### What are PAK's key governance and management strengths?

**Karan** - Having a Chairperson and deputy Chair that are available and able to talk and discuss items at a minutes notice, you can make so many more decisions.

**Rod** - I work at the school and within a minute's notice I can say I've got to go across to the language centre.

**Karan** - We work in really well with the education department, and they realise how important a language centre is to the community.

We place a big emphasis on accountability. We don't do big stick stuff, members are aware of the rules; they might be different ages, they might have different languages but they are committed, loyal and they believe in the language centre. And training is what empowers us, makes us go further. You've also got to look to the future and make sure that your new members have governance training as well, in case they want to step up. We identified that everybody needed some training, as a lot of people don't know what to do when they get on a committee.



ABOVE: PAK Chairperson Rod Wason and CEO Karan Hayward

#### Most of PAK's directors and members are spread out over a very large region. What are the challenges in maintaining effective governance and ensuring all are involved in what's going on in the organisation?

**Karan** - Our biggest challenge is of course getting in contact with our members, as you can see our mob is spread everywhere. We have our meetings so that we can bring them in or they can be on the telephone and we try to arrange our meetings around significant things that are happening in the community.

**Rod** - A few of our members are triple members (board members of 3 organisations) and sometimes the meetings might clash.

**Karan** - So we work around other organisations, we kind of share our dates and we arrange our meetings around other people's dates, that way we are not clashing.

*"We don't do big stick stuff, members are aware of the rules; they might be different ages, they might have different languages but they are committed, loyal and they believe in the language centre."*

Karan Hayward, CEO, PAK

**Have there been any significant structural changes or shifts in focus in PAK over the last few years? If so, what brought these on and what governance and management challenges did they present to the board & management?**

**Karan** - In the past we were a CDEP provider and very successful; we had lots of people employed, developed businesses, had lots going on.

**Rod** - Trailer making, catering....

**Karan** - Then we lost CDEP. We went down to having 8 workers, and we've been on a bit of a roller coaster. But the board has been really smart; they have put away money from all our little enterprises. We realised the writing on the wall and that grants are thin. We are happy when we do get our grants but we also keep money aside. Slowly but surely we have crawled our way back up to where we are getting a new building, and we have 45 full time workers. I know, if I left tomorrow, I have people that can step in. I'm quite happy that the future of the language centre is going to be strong.

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**Karan Hayward, CEO, PAK**

**Does PAK have a plan for developing Aboriginal youth leadership?**

**Karan** - No, we just haven't had time at the moment. I look for supervisors and think, okay, I'm going to build this and that's what we do. Somebody did that for me, they saw something in me and gave me a job and that's what you've got to repay, and setup the next generation.

**Rod** - Just getting their foot in the door makes a lot of difference.

**Karan** - And a lot of our workers have gone on to become bigger and better things and we appreciate that. They are our next leaders, they're my next bosses.

**You have been the CEO at PAK for 17 years. What advice about sustainability could you give to a new CEO just starting out with an organisation?**

Take advice, listen, because you don't know everything. Don't come in with perceived ideas. You have to be adaptable, that's the biggest thing, and willing to learn.

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**Karan Hayward, CEO, PAK**

**What external factors are enabling or constraining sustained strength and/or relevance for PAK going forward?**

**Karan** - We are going forward because we are financial and we are good in our management. We provide a can-do attitude more than anything else and we are willing to talk and work with other organisations. A constraint would be when you get the bigger organisations that believe you should come under them; we have fought that for 30 odd years, not to be under any other organisation.

**Rod** - That really concerns us.

**Karan** - We believe that us little organisations, and we still count ourselves as a little organisation, are needed to make the little ones gel (together). We all need to work together and when we work altogether we are strong. Our board demands we are independent and it's the main issue that brings all my members together.

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**Karan Hayward, CEO, PAK**

**Interviewer: Lola Susuico, Aboriginal Governance and Management Program**

**For more information on PAK, visit [www.papak.com.au](http://www.papak.com.au)**