

ABORIGINAL PEAK ORGANISATIONS NORTHERN TERRITORY  
**Aboriginal Governance & Management Program (AGMP)**

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## REPORT

# Innovating to Succeed Forum

3 March 2017, ALICE SPRINGS



**APONT**  
Aboriginal Governance  
& Management Program

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## INTRODUCTION



*Master of Ceremonies for the day, AGMP Manager Wes Miller, has over 25 years' experience in NT Aboriginal Affairs*

The APO NT Aboriginal Governance & Management Program (AGMP) is a not-for-profit Aboriginal agency devoted to governance and management support specific to the Northern Territory (NT), with a focus on remote communities.

In 2017 the AGMP facilitated an NT-wide forum for senior managers and board members of NT Aboriginal organisations, bringing them together to network and share stories to strengthen and build their capacity in management and governance.

The forum was held on 3 March in Alice Springs. It had a Central Australia-focus and showcased a diverse cross section of industries, with three major offerings to delegates.

The first was peer-to-peer learning. Six major organisations presented case studies that each demonstrated an innovative approach to good governance and management. Each organisation shared how their structures both meet compliance, administration and legal needs, as well as reflecting the needs of their local community and culture. A common link with all presenting groups was that innovating to succeed requires inventive and adaptable leaders and decision makers to work, especially in remote regions far from quick fixes. Communicating these successes creates a space for sharing ideas, industry leaders can reflect and build upon their work while up-and-coming organisations can take what works for them and try it back in their own organisation. Question and answer sessions after each presentation allowed delegates to clarify information and seek advice.

The second key take-home from the event was the chance for networking, which saw the beginning of many partnerships that have gone on to deliver real outcomes. Networking nurtures a stronger, more interconnected NT Aboriginal business sector which is more able to respond to address shared issues for Aboriginal communities in the NT.

Finally, the forum offered delegates the chance to engage directly with representatives from the Australian Government and the NT Government (NTG) who attended and spoke at the event, providing a rare opportunity to get current, tailored information relevant to the sector firsthand.

***Organisations who presented did so voluntarily and the AGMP would like to thank them for their support for the forum and willingness to share their stories.***

## WHY THIS FORUM?

In 2017 over 200 medium-to-large NT Aboriginal organisations are currently delivering programs and services in health, education and training, arts and culture, trades, business and outstation management to local communities, many of which are located in very remote areas. These organisations foster local economies, providing jobs to Aboriginal people and boosting self-determination. They are also massive drivers of the NT economy overall, with NT Aboriginal organisations self-generating approximately \$831 million in 2014/15 – the greatest overall share of Australia’s top 500 Aboriginal organisations’ combined income of \$1.882 billion.<sup>1</sup>

NT Aboriginal organisations face many unique challenges so building their capacity and resilience is a critical ongoing body of work of which the forum is a part. In recent years there has been a number of largescale successes where we have seen keystone organisations grow and flourish despite setbacks, establishing themselves as leaders in the NT Aboriginal organisation sector. These innovators are unique social enterprises which have grown to become prime examples for other communities looking to take control of their future and make the most of opportunities.

When planning the 2017 forum the theme of innovation was used broadly to capture stories where NT Aboriginal organisations have created structures or adopted approaches that best achieve their vision and goals while at the same time reflecting their unique sociocultural environment. The forum celebrated this innovation with case studies presented by six NT Aboriginal organisations which have each grown a good idea into a flourishing, major organisation that is bringing better outcomes to Aboriginal people in the NT. These organisations are each leaders in their field, whether this is primary health care, youth services, mediation and justice services, commercial enterprise, or community development. Case studies demonstrated an example of how they have creatively navigated governance and management to grow a great business idea or not-for-profit initiative to produce real results.

Innovative organisations are highly adaptable, always asking questions such as: do we have the right structure for the size and needs of the organisation? Are we ensuring that our corporate knowledge is maintained and passed on over time? Are we listening to, and engaging with, our local community and acting on their behalf? Have we got the right skills and expertise in our management and our boards to operate the best we can?

The forum looked at these questions from the perspective of six leading NT Aboriginal organisations and offered practical strategies for:

- setting a strategic direction
- succession planning for senior management
- board structure and the appointment of independent directors
- growing sustainable business and services for local benefit, especially in a remote setting
- developing resources to effectively communicate governance and management principles for Aboriginal boards and community members.

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (2015) ‘Top 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations Report 2014/15’ found at: <http://www.oric.gov.au/publications/top-500-report/top-500-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-corporations-2014%E2%80%9315>.





*Program staff welcome delegates at the forum*

*L-R: Lauren Ganley, CEO Desert Knowledge, Theresa Roe, Network Coordinator APO NT, Barbara Shaw, CEO Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation and Leanne Caton, Executive Director NT Office of Aboriginal Affairs, start the day with a cuppa*



*Margo Northey, CEO PWAC and Margaret Perdijert, Executive Chair PWAC, listen to presentations*

## OPENING ADDRESS FROM THE CHIEF MINISTER



The Chief Minister, the Hon Michael Gunner MLA, began by acknowledging the vital part Aboriginal organisations play in the NT, particularly their large contribution to the economy. He outlined his government's vision to create and foster better, faster, stronger and more Aboriginal organisations and businesses with a focus on increasing the workforce. The Chief Minister expressed his intention to handover decision making to Aboriginal people for their own communities, quoting the founding chairman of the Stronger Smarter Institute, Dr Chris Sarra, who said government should work with Aboriginal people to 'do things with us, not to us.'

The Chief Minister explained, 'We have to engage with the bush. We need to empower communities to make their own decisions. We do lead the way in the NT. We need to keep talking to Canberra. The bush has the solutions. We must keep celebrating the successes we have.'

The Chief Minister explained that across the NT employment rates are some of the best in the country but when it comes to the Aboriginal workforce the employment rate tells a different story; in fact the NT has the lowest rate of Aboriginal employment in the country. He outlined that, 'To ensure growth and employment for Indigenous Territorians business as usual must change. Policy makers must recognise that the NT's potential Indigenous workforce is one of our great untapped resources.'

The Chief Minister outlined the following key strategies his government would use to address this:

- **Building trust at the grassroots level:** Greater trust between government and local communities requires longer term plans and goals. Locals are more likely to get it right, but history shows that if the locals make a mistake the decisions are then made in the cities again. We want to change this cycle.
- **Local Decision Making:** Transitioning decision making back to Aboriginal communities in priority areas: education, housing, etc. The government wants communities driving change.
- **Longer term plans and goals:** Trust takes time to build and it underpins the government's Local Decision Making model which we want to work on over the next 10 years. This will include moving to longer term funding models where appropriate, for example five year models which provide more stability in the NGO/NFP sector.
- **Better governance:** We all have to find better ways to govern. Organisations need to continue to find ways to innovate, whether your organisation is big or small.
- **Better communication between levels of government:** The NT Government needs to lead the way to ensure all levels of government are on the same track.



The Chief Minister acknowledged that there is a long journey ahead and that his government will be judged on what they do, not what they say. He acknowledged the presence at the forum of the Co-Chairs of the NTG's Indigenous Subcommittee of Cabinet, the Member for Arnhem, Selena Uibo MLA, and the Member for Namatjira, Chansey Paech MLA, saying the Subcommittee will be holding the government to account to measure real outcomes on the ground. He thanked APO NT for its partnership and acknowledged the large crowd saying how good it was to see so many people at the forum who are working for a better Territory.

*'We have to engage with the bush. We need to empower communities to make their own decisions. We do lead the way in the NT. We need to keep talking to Canberra. The bush has the solutions. We have to keep celebrating the successes we have.'*

NT Chief Minister, the Hon Michael Gunner MLA, talks about the strength of NT Aboriginal organisations



NT Chief Minister, the Hon Michael Gunner MLA (centre), with APO NT and AMSANT staff

*'Business as usual must change. The NT's potential Indigenous workforce is one of our great untapped resources.'*

NT Chief Minister, the Hon Michael Gunner MLA, talks about the benefits of local Indigenous employment

*‘There is so much inspiring work happening in the Northern Territory right now and today you will get a taste of this... I hope that everyone will be able to share their great ideas and take those messages back home to your own organisations.’*

Wes Miller, AGMP Manager, opens the forum



*Delegates await the opening address*

*‘The NT Government will transition decision making back to communities... The government wants communities driving change.’*

NT Chief Minister, the Hon Michael Gunner MLA, talks about his government's vision for Local Decision Making

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation: 2016 National Indigenous Governance Award Winner

The Forum's keynote speaker was the pioneering Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation (WDNWPT) and its founding CEO, Sarah Brown. WDNWPT has set up its governance processes to be strong, effective and culturally appropriate. From its beginnings as a grassroots organisation WDNWPT capitalised on opportunities that came its way. This year it won the National Governance Award and is now reaching out nationally with new business partnerships, new permanent and mobile dialysis units, and even an exhibition about the organisation that will show at the Australian Museum in Sydney next year, further raising their national profile.

#### Case Study – Building an Aboriginal-controlled health service

*Sarah Brown, CEO Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation*

Our name, Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku, means 'Making all our families well'. Our strategic goals start from the core value of being on country (ngurra), which enables a good life (kurrumpa wanka) which in turn enables the right way (tjukaruru wankantjaku).

Our story starts in Kintore. People started getting sick with kidney disease, their kidneys no longer able to properly clean the blood. This means they needed to get dialysis treatment, where a machine cleans the blood instead. To get the treatment people had to relocate to Alice Springs. Dialysis machines can take up to five hours per session three times a week. People undergoing treatment described it as being 'a prisoner to the machine'. Kintore dialysis patients in Alice Springs began to ask, 'Why can't we have dialysis in Kintore?' At that time no one in government was able to help, so the community decided to raise the money themselves. Senior men and women created four paintings which raised over \$1 million at auction in 2000 at the Art Gallery of NSW. This money was used to set up the first remote dialysis service in Kintore.

When the Kintore service was set up the bush telegraph went wild. Other communities wanted dialysis services in their own communities and we wanted to help them too. We soon realised we wouldn't be able to have dialysis in every community straight away so we decided to get mobile, fitting out a truck with dialysis units, dubbed the 'Purple Truck'. The truck is not a long term solution, but it helps give people some hope that they will get a chance to spend time with their families.

Having a dialysis unit in community means cost savings for health departments and the government overall. People can continue to contribute to the local community and the NT economy. Having dialysis in community is also a good way to start a conversation in the local community and amongst families about health. When patients have to leave the community long term for treatment, it is 'hidden' in town. When the service is there in the community people start to see and think about it and are more likely to go into the clinic to get checks themselves to keep healthy.

We have been approached to set up services in many parts of the Territory and beyond. Miwatj Health Service in Arnhem asked for help. We have now got three units in Western Australia. We got money from the Minister for Regional Development, the Hon Fiona Nash, for a building in Utopia. We are expanding from two to four chairs in Lajamanu, and we are also planning our first unit in South Australia. The Minister has also given the NT Government funding to build dialysis centres in



Docker River, Mount Liebig and Papunya. We will be running these services, but we have to raise the running costs ourselves.

The Purple House in Alice is quite remarkable! We've got dialysis services, health care, social support, but we also have music, chooks, a fire pit and a pizza oven! We have also started a social enterprise making bush medicine products. We have lots of fun, look after each other and try to suck the juice out of life!

After being a runner up at the AIGI National Governance Awards in 2012 and then winning this year, we have generated new sources of funding and made new partnerships to grow and sustain the organisation. We are now about 70 per cent government funded; the NTG gives us funding for two nurses' salaries and we also get funds from the Commonwealth. The fact that people continue to donate through mining royalties, lease money and other means, is also significant because it makes us stronger. It demonstrates that there is buy in, people are supporting us. This is a success story of Aboriginal people coming up with their own model. It's important, because even if government policy changes we are able to adapt and still provide our service our way. We are an Aboriginal-controlled health service so we are best placed to be providing services to Aboriginal people. There is great pride, ownership and wellbeing in the communities that have their own service and you can't put a dollar amount on that.



Sarah Brown, CEO Western Desert Dialysis, gives the keynote address

*'Our story is really about grassroots determination to make life better and people learning the challenges of running an organisation along the way. We've learnt lots... so hopefully we can share that and have some fun.'*

Sarah Brown, CEO Western Desert Dialysis, talks with the Centralian Advocate in the lead up to the forum

## CASE STUDIES

### **Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation: *Transitioning to self-determination***

The Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation (STKIC), a living example of community control in action, presented on its current transition to independence after years under the auspices of the Central Desert Regional Council. To go independent from 1 July 2018 the STKIC must develop its own rules and processes, manage its own money, staff and assets and review its Rule Book and Board structure to ensure these fully represent the organisation's vision and the community.

While the STKIC is in the process of negotiating the details of its separation, its output, relevance and agency in Yuendumu and the wider region is on a steady increase. The STKIC presentation, '2 Stories: Community Ownership and Becoming Independent', reflects the organisation's challenges of walking in two worlds as they transition: the Yapa (Warlpiri) world and the Kardiya (non-Aboriginal) world. The presentation was jointly made by Council and STKIC representatives to demonstrate the work required from both sides to make the dream of STKIC independence a reality.

#### **Case Study – Council talks about community ownership and the road to independence**

*John Gaynor, Director Community Services Central Desert Regional Council*

Today's STKIC came from the original Yuendumu Mediation and Justice Committee, which is now 10 years old. The Committee was self-selecting and organic in formation, providing a family violence program, mediating family, domestic violence and custody disputes, and functioning as a reference group for wider community safety issues. Until now this work was funded and managed through the Regional Council, with the Committee focussed on developing their service model and delivering mediation services while Council focussed on program management, compliance and reporting to government.

Since its beginnings the Committee was unwavering in its desire for independence. The issue was really how to translate this aspiration into a functional model to bridge the 'two worlds' – the Yapa (Warlpiri) ways of mediating disputes and Kardiya (non-Aboriginal) ways of doing business.

After a successful decade of operation the Committee had established itself as a cultural authority in Yuendumu and further afield, with the Council and many other groups referring to it regularly for advice. During the major Yuendumu conflicts in 2010-12 the Committee's emphasis on building peace was crucial. An independent cost benefit study of the Committee, conducted by researchers from the University of Canberra in 2010, showed that 'for every dollar the government spends [there are] benefits of \$4.30. Much of this \$4.30 goes to government because it means they need to spend less on things like police, courts, prison and housing repairs.'<sup>2</sup>

In 2012 the Committee took a key step towards full independence by becoming an incorporated body and undertook a name change to become the Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation. 1 July 2018 is now the date the STKIC will fully separate from Council and become independent. This date was jointly chosen by the STKIC and Council to align with the current government community safety funding end date. Council resources that are currently used in community safety will be transferred to STKIC as of 1 July 2018 in order to ensure that it has financial sustainability into the future.

*‘Kurdiji in Warlpiri means shield. It represents safety for the Warlpiri people of Central Australia. When there was a big fight we used kurdiji to protect the tribe. All organisations need to have a kurdiji to look after their people, look after children, and make sure there is safety for the community.’*

Eddie Robertson, Director STKIC and WYDAC, explains the origins of the organisation's name

### **Case Study –STKIC talks about community ownership and the road to independence**

**Enid Gallagher, Director STKIC and Rhys Aconley-Jones, Mediation & Justice Coordinator**

STKIC has always been community-driven and we acknowledge the Council’s support for this. It was the community which identified its need for the Mediation Committee. At the time there were high levels of police and court contact with community members but no mechanism for people to sort out problems themselves. Community leaders grappled with how to develop a community response that would include representation for everyone. Would this be by skin name? Family group? Clan allegiance? In the end they used the structure of community leadership (which was always there) and came up with a representative group made up of a mixture, mostly based on clan allegiance. Mediators had to be people who were neutral and who held sway in the community.

Our current structure involves about 50 members, the Board of Directors who undertake day-to-day governance and decision making, tribal elders who the Mediators can go to for advice and the staff (Coordinators, Mediators and Community Safety Patrollers). The first hurdle for us will be separation of powers. Currently most of our Directors are also Mediators. In a community context this is an arbitrary barrier, but once we are fully independent only 50 per cent of Directors will also be allowed to be staff. It is important that everyone in the community feels that they can use mediation and that they are represented. There is an informal rule that every clan has representation on the Board and this may be formalised in the Rule Book further down the track.

Our work in conflict management takes a variety of forms including: a school safety program; a youth diversion program, victim/offender conferences, working with the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation to talk with young people about their problems before court and after, support, advocacy and interpreting services at bush court, interfacing when conflicts arise in the community, engaging the right people (for example neutral family members) to help sort out problems, and talking with offenders and victims to find practical ways to make amends for crimes.

We measure how we are going by going directly to the community for feedback – we take instructions from them. This means that we stay strong as a Yapa (Warlpiri) led-and-run group. The recognition by Kardiya (non-Aboriginal) power structures is also crucial, for example having elders talk to judges directly or police directing people to us. This sees the ‘two ways’ working hand in hand. It’s also important to us to have realistic and achievable goals. We are willing to talk, not only with our own countrymen but also with people from other communities who need help. When elders see their countrymen in jail they want to be able to do something about it. We are already working with other communities in the Central Desert Region to get them up and running too.

<sup>2</sup> Daly, A and Barrett, G. (2010) University of Canberra. ‘Independent Cost Benefit Analysis of the Yuendumu Mediation and Justice Committee’ found at: [http://www.centraldesert.nt.gov.au/sites/centraldesert.nt.gov.au/files/attachments/yuendumu\\_cba\\_0.pdf](http://www.centraldesert.nt.gov.au/sites/centraldesert.nt.gov.au/files/attachments/yuendumu_cba_0.pdf).





*Director STKIC, Enid Gallagher, and Mediation & Justice Coordinator, Rhys Aconley-Jones, talk about STKIC's transition to independence*



*Eddie Robertson, Director STKIC and WYDAC, spoke to delegates about Kurdiji, 'the shield'*

## Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation:

### *Best practice arrangements for the induction of a new CEO*

The Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) is an Aboriginal organisation created by and for Warlpiri people to develop the strength, health, confidence and leadership of Warlpiri youth.

In 2016 WYDAC transitioned from their long standing CEO of 10 years, Susie Lowe, to a new CEO, Matt Davidson. Matt and Susie jointly presented on how WYDAC successfully negotiated its way through this changeover, explaining the key ingredients for an effective and meaningful CEO handover in a remote Aboriginal community where good succession planning means understanding governance and management as well as culture and relationships. During the vulnerable transition period WYDAC did not slow its business as usual, continuing progress towards establishing its new student-centred Pina-Pina Jarrinjaku Centre which emphasises the Warlpiri concept of lifelong learning.

#### Case Study – A successful CEO transition

*Matt Davidson, CEO WYDAC and Susie Lowe, former CEO WYDAC*

**Matt:** There were 30 applicants for the position when it was advertised but within a week they had made a shortlist. Two weeks later I was interviewed over the phone by five people for about 1.5 hours. A while later WYDAC asked me to visit them in Yuendumu. During the long drive from Alice Springs I was in the car with the General Manager and we had a ‘two way chat’. By the time we got to Yuendumu a few hours later each of us had a good idea of what kind of person the Board was looking for in their new CEO. When I arrived in Yuendumu it was straight into a Board meeting where I met Peggy, one of WYDAC’s founders. Peggy asked me, ‘Do you love Yapa (Warlpiri people)? If you do this is the job for you, and if not, it’s not.’ Peggy showed me that while a majority of applicants could do the CEO job, for WYDAC it was vital to recruit someone with respect for the people and land.

**Susie:** When Matt started in the position it was full on, he was overloaded with information and stakeholder meetings. I was there at the start to do the corporate handover, which included providing Matt with my contact list, especially people whom I talked to regularly, as well as do in-person introductions for Matt to meet the right people. Time was spent introducing Matt to the management team and showing him how we work together with regular meetings for communication. I walked Matt through WYDAC’s compliance and policies, the quality management system and the software system where I gave Matt complete access to everything he would need.

**Matt:** By the end of the month Susie left and I had to stand on my own two feet. There was a lot of goodwill from the Board which helped. Then, when I thought all of the induction was over, one of the senior Warlpiri men decided to take me out on country and show me the Warlpiri way. I was taken to sacred sites, ceremony sites, and shown how to make a boomerang. I took so much knowledge away from this experience. I felt awe at the cultural knowledge and the depth of trust that had been placed in me in the CEO role.



*'WYDAC is a family. When a new CEO was needed people thought everything would change but a lot of time was spent on explaining things in the handover, and the strength of board and staff meant that vision stayed the same.'*

Matt Davidson, CEO WYDAC, on his transition into the CEO role

Matt and Susie explained that for a successful transition you need:

- a suitable workspace
- a ceremony to mark the significance of the changeover
- a cultural induction
- an overlap with the outgoing CEO to do an administrative handover, if possible.

Other things they learned about the transition included:

- The longer a CEO stays the better.
- The board needs a good amount of time to work through the change and think about who they want to come in (in WYDAC's case this was six months) so that the decision they make is not 'tokenistic', but is definitely theirs.
- It's important to prepare the staff.
- It's important to have good documentation.
- An organisation is like a family – the leader may change but if the transition is done right the strength of the board and staff, and the organisation's vision, remain the same.



Matt Davidson, CEO WYDAC and Susie Lowe, former CEO WYDAC, talk about their successful transition

## Palngun Wurnangat Aboriginal Corporation:

### *How the T-House is transforming the cultural, social and economic dynamics of Wadeye*

The Palngun Wurnangat (women together) Aboriginal Corporation (PWAC) is Wadeye's independently owned peak Indigenous women's organisation which today owns and runs several self-sustaining enterprises. PWAC shared how it has built up its commercial ventures, particularly its newly constructed T-House complex, a neutral and welcoming space for locals and visitors to meet. Outgoing CEO, Margo Northey, and Executive Chair, Margaret Perdjert, travelled to Alice Springs to talk about how the women's persistence, careful management, and well-planned programs have achieved commercial success to deliver real outcomes including ever increasing local employment, promoting healthy eating, showcasing and selling local artworks and providing essential services, such as laundry and IT facilities.

#### Case Study – Building a successful commercial venture

##### *Margo Northey, outgoing CEO PWAC*

PWAC incorporated in 1990. As Wadeye's women's organisation it had been running the town's takeaway from one building and a sewing centre and bakery in another. With the assistance of an Indigenous Business Australia loan PWAC moved the takeaway and bakery to a new complex, also renting an adjacent shop to the neighbouring cattle station to operate a butchery. The women then set up the community's early childhood program in the old takeaway. When funding was not forthcoming to continue the family program the building fell into disrepair, was vandalised, then finally bulldozed, leaving a large vacant block in the middle of town.

When I arrived back in Wadeye to manage PWAC in 2009 there were all sorts of ideas (mainly from the men) to redevelop the land. The women were nervous saying, 'That's our land'. They wanted a neutral meeting space so, in 2010, we applied for a small grant via the Aboriginal Benefits Account for two back-to-back demountables. By the time that grant was approved in 2012 the women were keen to think bigger. They wanted an op-shop 'like in Darwin' and a laundromat. The women said, 'Why settle? Let's do something bigger.'

At the time there was a trend for container buildings so PWAC got an architectural firm to do a quote for a modular 'break proof' building – not cheap! The local construction company, Thamarrurr Development Corporation, convinced PWAC to use their tilt slab concrete plant in Wadeye instead. We applied for more funding through the Indigenous Remote Service Delivery Special Account (a very tedious process) and eventually secured \$1 million in Commonwealth funds. We estimated we would need a further \$500,000 of our own money to have the buildings fully equipped and operational. Although the build took a very long time we had a beautiful community asset in the end. Local workers were involved wherever possible, for example local horticulture trainees landscaped and constructed the garden. The grand opening of the building, named the 'T-House' in honour of PWAC's founding Chairperson Theodora Narndu, was at the 2016 Wadeye festival.

The T-House includes a café, indoor and outdoor meeting spaces, a fire pit, an art space for local works and a retail shop. The organisation is fuelled with the talent and skills of Wadeye locals, with Wadeye women operating the coffee machine after going to Darwin for barista training and women doing the printing and designs for the products sold in the retail space. For security, rather than unsightly security bars, the windows have laser-etched steel covers which feature the women's designs.

In 2009 PWAC had a Coordinator in the art space with four Community Development Employment Projects participants. The takeaway was contract managed externally with six full time staff (all from overseas) and one local woman as a casual employee washing dishes. There are now 30 PWAC employees, 11 of whom are local. Non-local staff focus on creating a learning environment so that locals will fill these roles over time. Currently a local man is training alongside the baker and the butcher shop has a local training with the qualified butcher. Another young man, training to be a storeman, is looking forward to obtaining his forklift licence soon. PWAC was fortunate to hire a former 'Young Retailer of the Year' to establish the retail space and are training local permanent part time workers in the shop and café. The art space is staffed by a Coordinator and four permanent part time local women. All this is now funded through PWAC's own money. There is even an online store at [palngunwurnangat.org.au](http://palngunwurnangat.org.au).



*Margo Northey, outgoing CEO PWAC, has worked to build the organisation's commercial success*

Margo shared her advice about commercial ventures and starting a successful business:

- An organisation is stronger the longer someone is at the helm.
- The board needs to have a strong united voice, in PWAC's case we have representatives from each of Wadeye's three major song groups.
- A lot of persistence and stubbornness is needed to see the vision through.
- Good money management is important, paying loans out and making your own income means the board can make its own decisions.
- It's important to get staff with the right skills, in our case we needed people with a commercial focus.

*'The women said, "Why settle? Let's do something bigger."*

Margo Northey, outgoing CEO PWAC, on Wadeye women's motivation to start up their own commercial venture

## Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation:

### *Board structures and the value of independent directors*

The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) is a community controlled organisation and leader in the provision of primary health care for the Central Australian Aboriginal community. CAAC has a clear vision: that all Central Australians are to have the same level of health. To achieve this CAAC is investing in culturally appropriate community controlled primary health care services, including innovations to foster the development of a skilled workforce, and actively being accountable by providing regular feedback to the communities it services to implement best practice service delivery from young to old. CAAC's vision is reflected in its innovative governance arrangements through the structure of its Board of Directors. Director, Ricky Mentha, and CEO, Donna Ah Chee, shared insights into how this structure brings a diverse group together to chart a course and provide continuity for the organisation while also welcoming the expression of different views from its many communities and skillsets.

#### Case Study – Board structure and the CEO relationship

##### *Ricky Mentha, Director CAAC*

Our organisation structure reflects the CAAC vision of best practice health services that are culturally appropriate and accountable. For us this means our members are at the top, then the Board of Directors, then the CEO. The Board is the decision-maker, Directors aim to reach a consensus to make decisions – everyone has equal input. The CEO is responsible for implementing our operational strategies and acts as a guide to remind Directors of their obligations. It is important for the Board and the CEO to have a good relationship and good communication.

Our organisation has four divisions to reflect what we do including health services, public health, human resources and business services. The Board includes six Directors elected by community who are appointed at the annual general meeting each year. Each Director is elected for a two year term. Every year three positions go up for election and three stay on so that the ongoing Directors can support the newcomers. Every one of our members has the opportunity to vote for the Directors they want, we have even developed a postal ballot for those who can't attend the AGM to ensure all our members can have their say.

The CAAC Board also includes places for three independent Directors appointed by Board. There is a place for one primary health care specialist, one finance specialist and one administration specialist. Having independent Directors gives the Board access to a wider range of skills. We always try to recruit Aboriginal people into the independent Director roles first but if that is not possible we go for the skillset – colour doesn't always matter. With 350 employees and 400 members CAAC needs lots of skills to ensure consistency in the way it runs.

We didn't always have independent Directors, this was introduced four years ago when we moved to incorporate under the *Corporations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (CATSI) Act* with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). It was a conscious decision by the Board to incorporate with ORIC, we did consider other options but decided ORIC worked for us. One consideration was that under ORIC a federal minister can intervene and there was a concern that this person might come in at any time. However a few years ago we did have a special administrator come in – but it was the decision of Board for this to happen.



*'Meetings are about respectful engagement, the CEO and board members must not be afraid to voice different views so everyone can make up their own minds. Even if there is disagreement we can acknowledge that people have differing views and learn from each other.'*

Donna Ah Chee, CEO CAAC, on successful CEO-board engagement



Donna Ah Chee, CEO CAAC, and Ricky Mentha, Director CAAC, explain their successful board structure

### Case Study – Good reporting and allowing for difference

#### Donna Ah Chee, CEO CAAC

As the CEO it's important for me to ensure that all directors understand their role and responsibilities, especially the organisation's financial position and the separation between strategy and operations. When reporting to the Board it is important that the information I provide is of a high standard and readily understood. It's important to stay true to your strategic direction when planning for the future, and to keep the big picture and long term view in mind.

Directors need to be prepared for, and able to attend, meetings. We send out papers a week before and make sure Directors can attend using teleconference and video-link if needed. We ask our directors to give reasonable advance notice if they are not able to attend a meeting but this does not happen often – in fact we have never had to call a meeting off due to lack of a quorum!

Meetings are about respectful engagement, the CEO and Directors must not be afraid to voice different views so that everyone can make up their own minds. Even if there is a disagreement we can acknowledge that people have differing views and learn from each other.



## Central Land Council Community Development Program:

### *Successful strategies to enhance engagement and informed decision making of local communities and governance groups*

The Central Land Council (CLC) Community Development Unit shared some of its engagement strategies and the benefits of its community development approach:

- Effective and sustainable initiatives.
- A way for people to self-assess – where they are now and where they want to go.
- A way for people to learn skills that can also be taken to other parts of life.
- Bringing people together for increased community cohesion.
- People having a say in how they spend their own money.
- Empowerment – giving control back to people to make their own decisions.

Senior Community Development Officer, Georgie Stewart, presented alongside the Chair of the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) Committee, Maisie Kitson, and WETT Advisory Committee members, Barbara Martin and Fiona Gibson. WETT was set up by Traditional Owners in 2005 using royalties from mining in the Tanami region, which sees trust income used to achieve education and training outcomes prioritised by Warlpiri people.

*‘When carrying out our consultations we do them wherever people feel comfortable, we’ve done presentations out in the open air – on the sides of cars, and in basketball courts. We have tried lots of different things to get the model we are using now.’*

Georgie Stewart, Senior Community Development Officer, on good community consultation



L-R: Georgie, Maisie, Barbara and Fiona tell the WETT story

**Case Study – A community development approach*****Georgie Stewart, Senior Community Development Officer***

In 2005 the CLC set up a dedicated unit to run its Community Development (CD) program to assist with royalty money projects. Initially money was coming from national park gate money and mining. Soon, as more income streams became available, the CD program had six key programs and many sub-projects with many groups approaching the unit for help with their royalties. We started with three staff in the CD unit and now there are 13. CD projects can be small, like church shelters or vehicles, or bigger programs like swimming pools, basketball courts, education and training, health services such as dialysis, school excursions as well as cultural activities and cultural mapping. People have been learning through the processes of consultation and making decisions for the money, and are making more long term decisions over time.

The CD framework we use draws on a 40 year history of ‘participatory planning’ through the CLC. This is fundamentally about people talking and working well together to create ideas for the future. Planning resources must be in an accessible format and include practical tools (such as facilitation handbooks or pictorial representations). People involved make a choice about what governance structure they want. With the right set up diverse outcomes and benefits become possible.

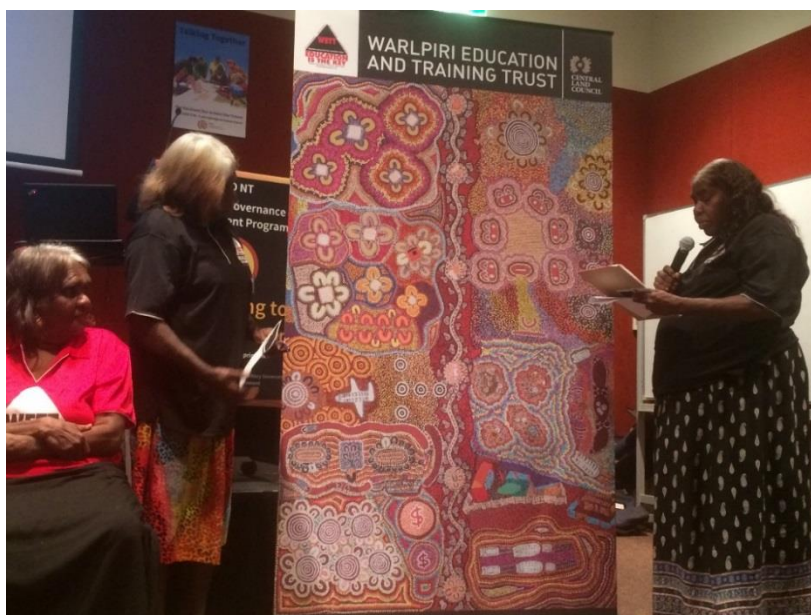
First, we do some planning without the money on the table to slow things down and to work towards investing in bigger more sustainable projects, especially those that support Aboriginal organisations. We work towards making sure people make informed decisions. Sometimes this means we produce pie charts or pictorial representations that translate on the ground, especially with financial information. For example, one representation that worked was little green men holding money bags that got bigger and smaller to symbolise changes in cash flow over time. This was an idea suggested by a member of the WETT Advisory Committee based on what she thought could work well.

When carrying out our consultations we do them wherever people feel comfortable. We’ve done presentations out in the open air – on the sides of cars, on basketball courts. In the years the CD unit has been running we have tried lots of different things to get the model we are using now and we will continue to adapt and develop it.

Central to our approach is that this is the communities’ own money so it is up to them how to use it. We take instructions from them and work these into detailed plans with nominated project partners. We set up clear processes that people have become familiar with. When it comes to contractual agreements we work with lawyers to make sure money is accountable.

There are rules about what money can and can’t go towards, and these have grown and changed over time. There are a lot of historical legacies, for example one hard one is always vehicles. With the parks income the rule is no vehicles, whereas with Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation royalties a lot of money is spent on vehicles, but increasingly only vehicles that sit within strong Aboriginal organisations. The key thing is that people make their own guidelines.

We also monitor and evaluate, asking, ‘How did it go?’ We ask our partners to provide data such as, ‘How many people got training certificates?’, ‘How many people played basketball?’ When we do our monitoring and evaluations we send out language speakers to ask the questions so that we get the right answers. Monitoring is a critical part of the CD methodology.



*L-R: Fiona, Maisie and Barbara with a replica of the WETT painting*

### **Case Study – The Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) painting**

**Maisie Kitson (Chair WETT), Barbara Martin and Fiona Gibson (WETT Advisory Committee)**

In 2011 Marlkindi Rose went to Canberra with Danielle Campbell from the CD unit to talk to government about the work of the CLC CD program and WETT. Marlkindi did a good job but when she got back she said it had been hard to tell the WETT story in English. In 2013, three members of the WETT Advisory Committee, Maisie Kitson, Barbara Martin and Nancy Oldfield spent one week creating the WETT painting, saying ‘It was raining so it was hard and when we were finished we were very proud.’ The painting has now been taken to many people to explain WETT, including Garma and New Zealand.

WETT started when Yapa (Warlpiri) teachers came together. In 2001, Yapa started talking to the CLC about spending royalty money on education and training. CLC lawyers came and we signed an agreement to start WETT. Then the CLC came with posters showing ideas from Yapa and from other places and asked communities which programs they wanted to start up. In the beginning, it was really hard, some people weren’t happy, they said, ‘You are taking our money’, but we explained that this is money for the whole community.

The WETT Advisory Committee comes together three times a year. We have had partnerships with the CLC, World Vision, community learning centres, and others. We come together for meetings in Alice Springs at the Central Land Council offices. We bring reports back from communities about what we have achieved.

Now WETT is doing many things, including Warlpiri curriculum development, an early childhood program and playgroup, sending secondary school aged kids on interstate excursions to learn new life skills, supporting kids who go to boarding school, paying elders to come into classrooms to teach, taking students and elders out on country visits in WETT vehicles to learn about hunting, paintings, dancing and dreaming stories, supporting youth football, learning centres, youth programs and working with WYDAC. Our kids are important so we want lots of activities for them.

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

### Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet

*Gary Powell, Regional Manager Central Australia, Indigenous Affairs*

In my time in Central Australia so far I have seen some great leadership and ideas and there is an opportunity to do more. Changing things for the better will involve government lifting its gaze across the whole region and thinking long term: every dollar needs to make a difference.

We are committed to reforming the way the Indigenous portfolio operates and start linking funding to outcomes. We want to move away from the transactional approach of the past and transition to a community development approach. Government is committed to building the capability of communities. There are a diverse range of players and government is keen to work with Aboriginal organisations that are high performing, that are innovating and succeeding. Central Australia can lead this work.

There have already been changes in government, we are working with the Indigenous Advisory Council towards the Closing the Gap targets. We have a commitment to empowered communities across a tristate area, specifically the bottom half of the NT and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in far north South Australia and eastern Western Australia – a key area of socioeconomic disadvantage.

I see government as having an enabling role with Indigenous leaders driving the agenda. Strong Aboriginal organisations are the backbone of this regional leadership approach. It's about working side by side, not top-down. It's a shift in how we think about business. We want to work closely with the NTG, the private sector, and Aboriginal organisations, towards this change.

A priority for Central Australia is to ensure there is good governance, capability and expertise on boards and that they are accountable. From the government's perspective strong boards mean that good outcomes are more likely and money will be spent more effectively. Strong Aboriginal boards and organisations will enable the shift from the government's old transactional and contract management approach to a focus on community development, building skills and increasing collaboration between Aboriginal leaders, organisations and government.



## Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Organisations

*Dayna Lister, Regional Manager Central Australia*

This year marks ten years of the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (the 'CATSI Act') administered by the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). The CATSI Act was based on the *Corporations Act 2001*, administered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, but includes special measures to ensure flexibility for Indigenous corporations.

Aboriginal organisations chose to incorporate under the CATSI Act because it enables control by Aboriginal people. Members determine the role for the corporation and how it will help their community, meetings can be held in language, there are no registration fees and Rule Books can be shaped to reflect the corporation's specific needs. For example, in order to ensure appropriate representation for their organisation ORIC has allowed for WYDAC to have up to 50 directors compared with the usual 12. Additionally, reporting each year can be adapted to the corporation's needs and is sometimes exempted. For example, some landholding corporations found it was not realistic to have meetings every year so, after discussion with land councils, meetings for these groups are now done on a three-yearly basis.

Being registered under CATSI allows Aboriginal corporations access to a wealth of support and resources via ORIC. Resources include compliance and governance support, special administration support, free tailored corporate governance training, compliance assistance, dispute management, legal help, human resources help (including advertising jobs on the ORIC website and assistance to recruit for senior positions), help finding independent directors to fill skill gaps on boards as well as help with regulatory actions such as examining the books and financial records. More information about these resources can be found on the ORIC website at [oric.gov.au](http://oric.gov.au).



*Dayna Lister, ORIC Regional Manager Central Australia, talks about support available for Aboriginal corporations*



## NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

### Department of the Chief Minister

*Andy Cowan, Deputy Chief Executive*

Before coming to work in government I worked in the Kimberley for six years in education, during which time I assisted a school become community controlled. I was employed by the School Board and was always interested in how it ran. At one particular school, they had a meeting every three weeks because the parents and community wanted to be involved and there were many decisions to be made along the way. The meetings had an 80-90 per cent attendance rate. This experience has convinced me that community control works.

Following the election of the Gunner Labor Government in 2016, government agencies were restructured, with Aboriginal Affairs sitting within the Department of the Chief Minister. The Aboriginal Affairs Subcommittee of Cabinet was also created, ensuring an Aboriginal voice to Parliament.

The NTG is working on a new Aboriginal Affairs Strategy, developed in consultation with APONT and key stakeholders. Programs will include the Remote Engagement Coordination Strategy, a focus on governance and capability, a Community Champions program and the First Circles program.

One key area for progress will be in Local Decision Making (LDM) across portfolios: housing, local government, education and training, health, looking after children, as well as law and justice. This is a 10 year plan; it won't happen overnight and Aboriginal people need to be in the driver's seat. LDM will have a staged approach to ensure local communities design and monitor their own programs and services.

In line with its focus on LDM, the NTG is committed to implementing the APO NT Partnership Principles to work with, and secure, the support of non-Aboriginal organisations towards strengthening and rebuilding an Aboriginal controlled development and service sector in the NT.



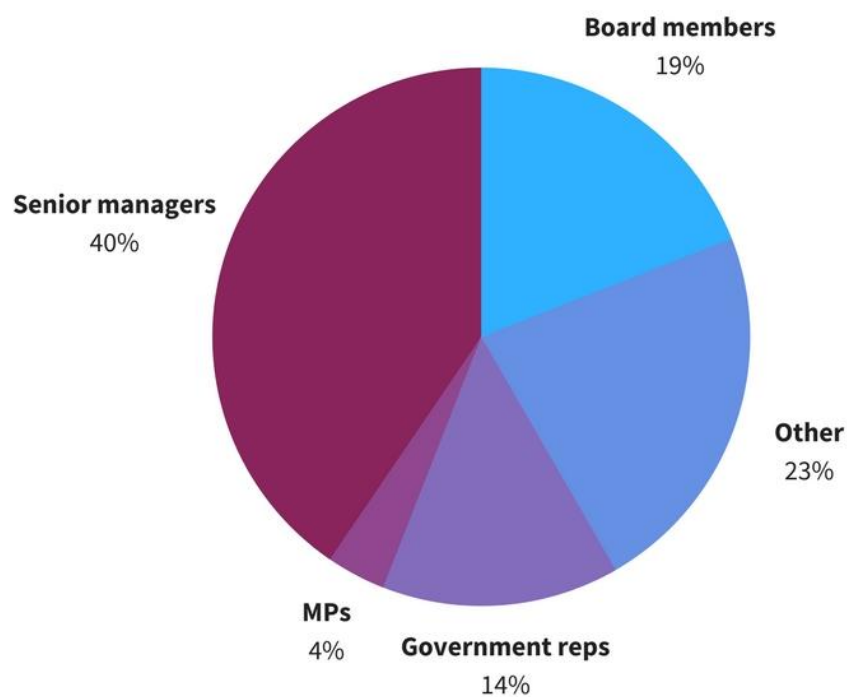
*Andy Cowan, Deputy Chief Executive, NT Department of the Chief Minister, talks about NT Aboriginal organisations driving Local Decision Making*

## DELEGATES

The forum drew interest from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations from across the NT. The event was publically advertised with delegates asked to register to attend. Invitations were extended to all senior management staff and board members of NT Aboriginal organisations. 109 people pre-registered to attend the forum, with 84 delegates signing in on the day. Approximately nine per cent of attendees were from the Top End and Barkly regions with the rest coming from Central Australia. All levels of government were represented.

The pie chart below breaks down delegate attendance by role. The 'other' category includes AGMP Steering Committee members, senior managers of non-Aboriginal organisations who work closely with partners in the sector and staff who attended in their capacity as presenters, or to accompany senior staff or board members.

**Forum Delegates by Role**



*Right: Delegates were provided with a welcome pack on arrival which included the program, presenter biographies and other governance resources, including a copy of the APO NT Partnership Principles*



*Left: Gary Powell, Peter Pearce (PMC) and Peter Riley (NPY Women's Council) were happy to be at the forum to talk with managers and board members of NT Aboriginal organisations*

*Right: Ricky Mentha, Matt Davidson and Enid Gallagher catch up during the lunch break*







*Delegates from many industries travelled from across the NT to be in Alice Springs for the forum*



*Delegates from CLC, WDNWPT and STKIC listen to case study presentations*



*The forum allowed delegates from different industries to network and connect*



## DELEGATE FEEDBACK

Delegates at the forum were asked to complete a short feedback form at the close of the event. Feedback received strongly supported another similar event occurring in the future.

### General feedback

*‘Great opportunity to learn and network and to gain insights into other organisations and find ways to overcome challenges.’*

*‘Good to put faces to names.’*

*‘Great way to showcase self-determination and community-based solutions.’*

*‘This forum needs to be NT-wide.’*

*‘Inspirational stories about how some corporations have set up innovative structures and governance systems.’*

*‘Diverse range of information, lots of topics we need to review regularly.’*

*‘Good range of topics presented.’*

*‘Didn’t really know what to expect but it was really good – well-presented, positive stories.’*

*‘Thank you – a well organised, well catered and friendly space to get exposure to a group of very interesting people doing some great work.’*

*‘Well done – a well organised, interesting and informative forum.’*

*‘Thank you for a very great gathering. I look forward to future gatherings such as this and will hopefully share my journey as a Director in another capacity/position within Aboriginal organisations.’*

### About the Case Studies

*‘The stories showed success and how to design, develop, and implement good governance programs through understanding community needs and consultation.’*

*‘Quality of real speakers with real success stories.’*

*‘Impressed with the breadth of work being done and the sheer force, patience and passion of individuals and organisations to achieve it.’*

*‘Excellent information presented; great ideas and strategies relevant to our organisation.’*

*‘A good cross section of organisations and stories/perspectives with strong Aboriginal voices. Good, strong stories of Aboriginal ownership and success as well as some insights into government – so a good mix.’*

*‘Real life, real world examples of work done by Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations providing lots of insight and ideas.’*

*‘Loved hearing the success stories and the challenges they overcame to get where they are.’*

Best case study PWAC for, *'A fantastic business model – interesting and great results.'*

Best case study STKIC for, *'Community-based mediation and justice management.'*

Best case study WYDAC for, *'The size and commitment required and the value of a good executive transition process.'*

### **About the Government Presentations**

*'Government actions speak louder than words.'*

*'Good to hear further talk from government about a new engagement model.'*

*'The government's perspective is influential and it's good to hear them talk about hearing and supporting the voice of Aboriginal people.'*

*'The Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations does much more than I originally thought.'*



*Delegates Camille Lew-Fatt, Acting Director Career Development NTG, and Maisie Austin, CEO NT Stolen Generations AC, were positive about the day*

## MEDIA COVERAGE

The forum was covered in the local Newscorp publication, the Centralian Advocate which ran a story to promote the event a few weeks beforehand including an interview with the AGMP Manager, Wes Miller, and the Keynote Speaker, Sarah Brown. The AGMP Manager also did radio interviews in the lead up to the event on ABC Alice Springs and Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) Radio as well as on SBS Living Black, a nationally broadcast radio program. On the day of the forum the STKIC Coordinator, Rhys Aconley-Jones, and STKIC Director, Enid Gallagher, were interviewed live-to-air for the SBS Living Black Radio program, speaking about their presentation and describing the day. All publically available media materials from the forum are available at [aboriginalgovernance.org.au](http://aboriginalgovernance.org.au).



*Forum delegates enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new partnerships*



## CONCLUSION

By all accounts the forum was a successful event. Evaluation forms completed by participants expressed the view that the forum had been well worth the investment they had made in time and costs. Many of the participants also indicated they would attend AGMP events in the future. The combination of high calibre speakers and a thoughtful, committed participant group helped to strengthen relationships and forge new ones, expanded participants' knowledge base and provided critical peer support.

The day's sessions focussed on a number of key themes including strategic planning and growing business, transitioning managers at a senior level in the organisation, board structures, including the use of independent directors, becoming a self-determining organisation and engaging effectively with boards and communities. With such a diverse array of topics the forum was an expo of some of the pioneering NT Aboriginal organisations currently leading their fields, whether this be justice and mediation, health, youth services, community development or commercial enterprise.

The forum was a key opportunity for networking and building relationships with others in the sector, allowing experienced managers to build on successes and share knowledge with newer managers, as well as an opportunity to talk directly to government about current policy direction.

The forum's message to all delegates is that innovation and working to make great ideas a reality is achievable, you just need the right governance and management tools aligning with support from the sector, government and the community to get there. There are so many examples to draw on already, it's important to get those stories out to others in the sector, the government, and into the wider public domain. As one forum participant explained, 'the breadth of work being done and the sheer force, patience and passion of individuals and organisations to achieve it is incredible.'



*Sharing innovative success stories builds stronger, more resilient NT Aboriginal organisations to lead the way for the future*



# AGMP Innovating to Succeed Forum

Alice Springs Convention Centre  
Friday, 3 March 2017

## PROGRAM

- 8:15 – 9:00     **Sign in** (tea and coffee provided)
- 9:00 – 9:10     **Welcome to Country** – Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation
- 9:10 – 9:20     **Welcome from the APO NT Aboriginal Governance & Management Program** Wes Miller, Program Manager
- 9:20 – 9:30     **Opening** – Northern Territory Chief Minister – Hon Michael Gunner MLA
- 9:30 – 10:00   **Keynote address**  
**Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation (Western Desert Dialysis)**  
2016 National Indigenous Governance Award Winner  
Western Desert Dialysis has set up its governance processes to be strong, effective and culturally appropriate. Its strategic goals start from the core value of being on country (ngurra), which enables a good life (kurrumpa wanka) which in turn enables the right way (tjukururru wangkantjaku). From its beginnings as a grassroots organisation Western Desert Dialysis built on available resources and capitalised on opportunities that came its way. Since winning at the National Governance Awards, Western Desert Dialysis is now reaching out nationally with new business partnerships, and an exhibition about the organisation that will show at the Australian Museum in Sydney next year.
- 10:00 – 10:30     **Open Discussion**
- 10:30 – 11:00     MORNING TEA
- 11:00 – 11:30     **Update from the Northern Territory Government**  
Andrew Cowan, Deputy Chief Executive Department of the Chief Minister
- 11:30 – 12:00     **Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation (STKIC)**  
Transitioning to self-determination

STKIC discuss its transition to independence from the Central Desert Regional Council as an example of community self-determination in action, describing how it is now gradually taking over control of its own operations in order to ensure its sustainability as an independent organisation. This includes developing its own rules and processes to become fully independent from 1 July 2018.

12:00 – **Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC)**

12:30 **Best practice arrangements for the induction of a new CEO**

In 2016 WYDAC transitioned from their long standing CEO of 10 years to a new CEO. WYDAC talk about how it successfully negotiated its way through this vulnerable period for the organisation, explaining the key ingredients to an effective and meaningful handover in a remote Aboriginal community where good succession planning means understanding governance and management as well as culture and relationships. During this time WYDAC has not stopped progress with the establishment of its new student-centred Pina-Pina Jarrinjaku Centre. The Centre emphasises the Warlpiri concept of lifelong learning through the provision of varied learning opportunities from e-banking and basic literacy to formal certificates in courses such as Business, Media and Land Management.

12:30 – 1:15 LUNCH

1:15 – 1:45 **Update from the Australian Government**

Gary Powell, Regional Manager Central Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Dayna Lister, Regional Manager Central Australia, Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations

1:45 – 2:15 **Palngun Wurnangat Aboriginal Corporation (PWAC)**

**How the T-House is transforming the cultural, social and economic dynamics of Wadeye**

PWAC discuss how it is capitalising on commercial ventures, particularly its newly constructed T-House complex, to simultaneously develop economic opportunity in the region as well as provide a neutral and welcoming space for locals and visitors to meet, mingle, and exchange ideas and information. PWAC describe how persistence, careful management and well-planned programs can simultaneously achieve many outcomes including local employment, promoting healthy eating, showcasing and selling local artworks, and providing local services such as laundry facilities.

2:15 – 2:45 **Central Australian Aboriginal Congress**

**Board structures and the value of independent directors**

CAAC is a community controlled organisation and leader in the provision of primary health care for the Central Australian Aboriginal community. Key to CAAC's vision is listening and responding to the needs and wishes of this community to provide the highest quality services. This vision is reflected in the structure of the CAAC Board of Directors; with six members directly elected by the community and three non-member directors, with specialist expertise in areas such as primary health, financial management as well as governance and administration, appointed by the

elected Board members. CAAC shares its insights into how this structure has evolved over time and how it is working today.

2:45 – 3:15 AFTERNOON TEA

**3:15 – 3:45 Central Land Council (CLC) Community Development Program**  
 Successful strategies to enhance engagement and informed decision making of local communities and governance groups  
 The Central Land Council (CLC) Community Development unit share some of its engagement strategies and the benefits of its community development approach. Members of the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT), set up by Traditional Owners using royalties from mining in the Tanami region, then talk about their WETT painting and explain how they use it to tell the story and history of WETT, which sees trust income used to achieve education and training outcomes prioritised by Warlpiri people.

3:45 – 4:25 **Open Forum**

4:25 – 4:30 **Closing Remarks**

4:30 – 5:00 **NETWORKING SESSION @ THE JUICY RUMP**

## ORGANISATION BIOGRAPHIES

### Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation



Also known as Western Desert Dialysis, this Aboriginal-controlled not-for-profit organisation was formed with a mission to tackle kidney disease and build healthier and stronger communities.

In 2000 four collaborative paintings by senior Pintupi Luritja men and women from the Western Desert communities were auctioned for over \$1 million at the Art Gallery of NSW. The money was used to set up a dialysis service in Kintore in 2004 which has now expanded to include services in eight remote communities as well as a mobile dialysis unit, the Purple Truck. This means that

many dialysis patients now no longer have to leave their home communities and can stay on country with their families.

Western Desert Dialysis has now grown to provide a host of services including safe travel to communities for special events, social support, health education and advocacy, as well as a Wellbeing Program, which sells bush medicine products, generating employment and revenue while preserving traditional knowledge.

After being finalists in 2012, last year Western Desert Dialysis won the National Indigenous Governance Award. This incredible achievement has opened up further possibilities for the organisation to continue to work to reduce the prevalence of kidney disease, improve the lives of those with renal failure, and reunite families with the recognition that culture and community are essential for health and wellbeing.



### Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation

The Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation (STKIC) provides Mediation and Community Safety Patrol services in Yuendumu, a community of between 800-1000 mostly Warlpiri and Anmatyerr people, 293 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs.

In March 2012 what was then the Yuendumu Mediation and Justice Committee was registered as a corporation under the CATSI Act, while remaining auspiced by the Central Desert Regional Council.

In March 2016 the Corporation was registered under its new name, the Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation, to reflect its expansion into Willowra and future plans to work with the Nyirripi community.

Around the same time, the Board of Directors secured the agreement of Council to apply for funding as a Council program for a further two years before becoming fully autonomous on 1 July 2018.

STKIC is now in the midst of this transition. For now it is bound by the Council's policies and procedures and does not have financial autonomy and this is changing incrementally. It does have



a large membership, holds annual general meetings, elects a Board of Directors and operates according to its own Rule Book.

STKIC plays a powerful role in building community harmony and is a positive and compelling example of the drive of the community in taking control of matters that affect them.

### Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation



Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) is an Aboriginal organisation created by and for Warlpiri people to develop the strength, health, confidence and leadership of Warlpiri youth.

Beginning in 1993 as a grassroots rehabilitation program for young petrol sniffers in Yuendumu, from there WYDAC grew into the Mount Theo Outstation Program that provides cultural rehabilitation in Warlpiri country.

At risk youth are referred by community elders, police, and corrections to Mount Theo, 160 kilometres away from the community, where elders care for them in a supportive environment to reconnect them with their culture, family, health and education. Since 1993 the Mount Theo outstation has helped more than 500 clients.

WYDAC's other key service is its Youth Development Program which recognises that youth need to be occupied, engaged and challenged in order to grow strong. The program is comprehensive, running sport and recreation activities while also facilitating leadership through education, training and employment opportunities as well as targeted project work.

As it has grown, WYDAC has been approached to implement youth diversion and development programs in other Warlpiri communities including Willowra, Nyirrlpi and Lajamanu. Today its Warra-Warra Kanyi Counselling program also operates to provide early intervention, counselling and rehabilitation support for young people, including an after-hours crisis response service (which has recently been extended to WYDAC's outreach communities). Despite a changeover of its long-standing CEO in 2016 WYDAC continues to be extremely successful in its established programs, promoting positive and meaningful pathways for Warlpiri young people.

## Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation



Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation (CAAC) is the largest Aboriginal community-controlled health service in the Northern Territory with a core vision that all Central Australians should enjoy the same level of health. CAAC began as an Aboriginal organisation to provide a voice for Aboriginal residents in Central Australia and soon became a comprehensive primary health care service providing a medical clinic, social and preventive programs, as well as political advocacy on the social determinants of health.

CAAC provides a primary health care service to people living in and around Alice Springs as well as in remote locations including Amoonguna Health Service, Mutitjulu Health Service, Ntaria and Wallace Rockhole Health Service, Santa Teresa Health Service and Utju Health Service. This includes specialised services for women, men, children and families, aged and disabled people, programs focussed on education and training and social and emotional wellbeing, and even a mobile dental vehicle to improve its outreach to remote communities.

CAAC is committed to ensuring that the communities it services are the decision makers for the organisation. Its Board of Directors is made up of six members elected by the community and an additional three specialist non-member directors appointed by the Board. All members are invited to nominate for Director positions when they become available, meaning that everyone is given the opportunity to shape the organisation.

## Palngun Wurnangat Aboriginal Corporation



Palngun Wurnangat (women together) Aboriginal Corporation (PWAC) is an independently owned Indigenous women's organisation based in Wadeye, located about 380 kilometres southwest of Darwin in the Thamarrurr Region. PWAC today owns and runs several self-sustaining enterprises.

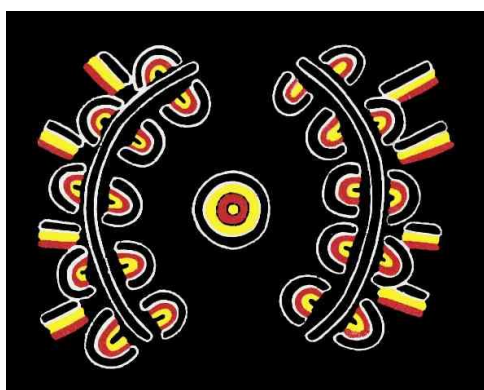
Wadeye women's contribution to the development of their region is significant, starting with their management of the market garden at Port Keats Mission, to working in the sewing centre. In the past the women also made and sold baked goods outside the centre and established a small takeaway business.

A formal Women's Association was formed in 1990 and, by 2002, the bread and cake making enterprise had evolved into a new takeaway and commercial bakery known as Mi Patha (good food) Takeaway. The sewing centre also evolved into an art space specialising in making and selling printed fabrics and handmade products. Profits generated from these business activities went to support Wadeye families and run the Women's Centre. The Centre continued to grow to become an all-inclusive space, with everything from clothing manufacture, counselling, cooking classes and support for mothers, to amenities such as a public phone and toilet as well as access to the internet for banking and other services.

2014 saw the start of a successful new venture harvesting and selling wild native Kakadu Plum (Mi Marrarl), a bush medicine fruit long used by locals, which has recently become internationally popular. This venture has provided up to 150 seasonal incomes and hopes to employ more as it expands. Furthering its commercial success, in June 2016 PWAC opened the T-House, a complex comprising a café, gallery, office, laundry facilities, retail outlet and meeting spaces. Mi Patha Catering also expanded to include a butcher shop, with fresh seafood flown in weekly.

PWAC is a dynamic example of the innovation and energy of Wadeye women acting to address the needs of their immediate community as well as harnessing changes in global markets to build up the economy, culture and social life in the local region.

### Central Land Council Community Development Program



The Central Land Council (CLC) is a corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* and a Native Title Representative Body under the *Native Title Act 1993*. It is a leading Aboriginal advocacy agency with 40 years' experience engaging Aboriginal people and assisting them to get their land back.

Since 2005 the CLC has used a community development (CD) approach, set out in the CLC CD framework, to support Aboriginal groups to translate their land and native title rights into development outcomes.

The CD program works in partnership with Aboriginal people to direct their own resources, derived from a variety of land use agreements, to initiatives that both maintain Aboriginal identity, language, culture and connection to country as well as strengthen Aboriginal communities' capacity to participate in mainstream Australia through improving health, education and employment outcomes.

The CD program sees community development as a way of working that builds Aboriginal ownership and control and strengthens groups or communities through the achievement of their own social, cultural, environmental and economic objectives. It is also focussed on building an evidence base for the CLC's CD approach and the value it has for contributing to Aboriginal capabilities and sharing the lessons learned with other government and non-government agencies.

***All case study write ups and biographies were approved by the organisations' presenters.***

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ARDS Aboriginal Corporation	Indigenous Community Television Limited
Atyenhenge-Atherre Aboriginal Corporation	Indigenous Remote Communications Association
Bagot Community Health Centre	Ingkerreke Outstations Resource Services Aboriginal Corporation
Batchelor Institute	Institute for Aboriginal Development Aboriginal Corporation
Bula'bula Arts Aboriginal Corporation	Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation
Bushmob Aboriginal Corporation	Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation
Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association Aboriginal Corporation	Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation
Central Australia Health Service	Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation	Northern Land Council
Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service	North Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency
Central Australian Congress Aboriginal Corporation	Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation
Central Desert Regional Council	Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation
Central Land Council	Palngun Wurnangat Aboriginal Corporation
Centrefarm	
Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services Aboriginal Corporation	



Pintubi Homelands Health Service Aboriginal Corporation

Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation

Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation

Urapuntja Health Service Aboriginal Corporation

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

Warlpiri Education and Training Trust

Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation

Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation

Willowra Early Childhood Reference Group

World Vision Australia

Yapa-Kurlangu Ngurrara Aboriginal Corporation

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