



**APONT**  
**Aboriginal Governance  
& Management Program**  
Our Decisions | Our Actions | Our Future

## **APONT Innovating to Succeed Forum** **3 March 2017, Alice Springs Convention Centre** **Presenter Biographies and Case Studies**

### **Aboriginal Governance & Management Program**



*Program Manager, Wes Miller*

#### **Biography**

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

The Program comes under the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory Alliance (APONT), comprised of the Central Land Council, the Northern Land Council, the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory.

The Program has a strengths-based, action-based research approach. This means: building on organisations' existing strengths, working together with other agencies for collective impact, and research and learning with working with NT Aboriginal organisations to build resources for the future.

The program is managed by Wes Miller, a Jawoyn man from the Katherine region with over 25 years' experience working in Aboriginal Affairs in the Northern Territory, including over 10 years in the role of CEO at various Aboriginal organisations, and as the Executive Chairman of a highly successful Northern Territory Aboriginal tourism enterprise. Wes has served as a Director on several Aboriginal boards at local, regional, state and national levels.

### **Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation (Western Desert Dialysis)**



#### **Biography**

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 local senior men and women 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 dialysis patients 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.

### **Keynote address**

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.

## **Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation**



### **Biography**

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 km 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 the Council to apply for funding as a Council program for a further two years before becoming a fully independent, autonomous body as of 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 AGMs, 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.

### **Case study – 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.

## **Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation**



### **Biography**

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 Mt Theo Outstation Program that provides cultural rehabilitation in Warlpiri country.

At risk youth are referred by community elders, police, and corrections to Mt Theo, 160km 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 Mt Theo outstation has helped more than 500 clients.

WYDAC's other key service is its Youth Development Program which recognises that to divert youth and see them grow they need to be to be occupied, engaged and challenged. The program is comprehensive, running not only sport and recreation activities, but 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, Nyirripi 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 Chief Executive Officer in 2016, WYDAC continues to be extremely successful in its established programs, promoting positive and meaningful pathways for Warlpiri young people.



## Case study – 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.

## Palngun Wurnangat Aboriginal Corporation



### Biography

Palngun Wurnangat (women together) Aboriginal Corporation (PWAC) is an independently owned Indigenous women's organisation based in Wadeye, located about 380 km southwest of Darwin in the Thamarrurr region. PWAC today owns 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. 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 last year PWAC opened the T-House, a complex comprising a café, gallery, office, laundry facilities, retail outlet and meeting spaces. MiPatha 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.



### **Case study – 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.

### **Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation**



#### **Biography**

Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation (Congress) 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. Congress 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.

Congress provides a primary health care service to people living in and nearby Alice Springs, including six remote communities: Amoonguna, Ntaria and Wallace Rockhole, Mpwelarre (Santa Teresa), Utju (Areyonga) and Mutitjulu. 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.

Congress 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 positions when they become available, meaning that everyone is given the opportunity to shape the organisation.

### **Case study – Board structures and the value of independent directors**

Congress is a community controlled organisation and leader in the provision of Primary Health Care for the Central Australian Aboriginal community. Key to Congress' 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 Congress' 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 or governance and administration, appointed by the elected board members. Congress shares its insights into how this structure has evolved over time and how it is working today.

## Central Land Council Community Development Program



### Biography

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 approach, described in the CLC Community Development

Framework, to support Aboriginal groups to translate their land and native title rights into development outcomes.

The 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 their Aboriginal identity, language, culture and connection to country and strengthen their capacity to participate in mainstream Australia through improving health, education and employment outcomes.

The 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 community development approach and the value it has for contributing to Aboriginal capabilities and sharing the lessons learned with other government and non-government agencies.

### Case study – 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. The WETT sees trust income used to achieve education and training outcomes prioritised by Warlpiri people.