



Celebrating Indigenous Governance

Success stories of the
2008 Indigenous Governance Awards



Reconciliation Australia

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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resourcing the future



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Cover photos – staff and members of the IGA finalist organisations

Foreword

In 2008, the Indigenous Governance Awards were held for the third time attracting a new collection of high quality applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations across the country. The judges were impressed and inspired by the depth and breadth of Indigenous achievement in Australia, fresh examples of success to promote to the wider community.

The partnership between Reconciliation Australia and BHP Billiton that supports and coordinates the Awards is all about identifying, analysing and promoting high achieving Indigenous organisations. These are exceptionally well run organisations making a difference in their communities. They are led by visionary, highly able leaders.

This publication includes profiles of the 2008 Awards finalists and sets out a great range of 'ideas that work' – stories of what is working in Indigenous communities. By learning from each other, organisations can adapt ideas to meet local needs and replicate success across Australia.

The members of the Awards judging panel always find it difficult to select eight finalists from the outstanding field of applicants. In 2008, as always, each finalist received a site visit from members of the judging panel before our final selection of the National and the Highly Commended award winners.

The site visits always fill me with hope and pride and determination. Meeting the people from these organisations reinforces my certainty that good governance is the heart of success. It gives people confidence, encourages them to give it their all – success is contagious, so the spin-off value of good governance is enormous in the communities these organisations serve.

I thank and congratulate all the organisations that applied for the awards last year, providing so many learnings for others that are contained in this booklet. This booklet is about sharing your stories of success.

I hope that many people around Australia, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, will join with me in recognising, valuing and supporting ideas that work so the success is replicated far and wide.



*Professor Mick Dodson AM
Chair, Indigenous Governance Awards*



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Good governance means good business

In many of the 25 countries in which BHP Billiton operates we are hosted by Indigenous communities. Being a part of these communities, we understand that strong leadership and sound governance are critical for their health, pride and prosperity.

From our experience we also know that good governance is central to the success of any organisation, whether it is a small non-profit group, a local council or a large business.

Many Indigenous entrepreneurs are looking for opportunities to build sustainable enterprises and actively contribute to today's society. They are creative, innovative and keen to learn about the success factors required to have a viable and sustainable business. The Indigenous Governance Awards Handbook provides this direction by showcasing best practice from leading organisations identified through the awards process.

We are enormously proud of the way the Indigenous Governance Awards program has drawn attention to important Indigenous success stories and hope our colleagues from the corporate and government sectors will join us in continuing to actively support good governance in Indigenous organisations across Australia.



Ian Wood
Vice President Environment and Community Relations
BHP Billiton

Image: Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara





Image: Winda Mara

What is governance?

Governance may seem like a relatively new word, but every society, culture and group of people have been practicing governance since time began. Governance is the way we organise ourselves to get things done. The ancient Greeks first defined governance as the art of steering boats. Over time governance has been adapted to mean the art of steering societies and organisations.

Governance exists in all communities and businesses, from family clan groups to banks and sporting teams. Governance can be the laws and traditions that form the cultural basis of any particular group as well as the formal documents of organisations such as policies, rules and business plans.

'We use a simple definition of governance. It is to make sure things are run well.'

Richard Weston, Regional Director,
Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation,
NSW, finalist 2005 Indigenous Governance Awards

Governance gives a community or organisation the ways and means to:

- **assign and exercise power and authority;**
- **determine group membership and identity;**
- **make the important decisions and implement them;**
- **develop and enforce its rules;**
- **work together to carry out its roles and responsibilities;**
- **resolve conflicts and negotiate with others; and**
- **plan future strategic direction.**

Essentially, governance is how a group of people choose to share power, authority and accountability in order to make the decisions that enable them to achieve their collective goals and vision.

Indigenous governance



Image: Warakurna Artists

Solid, resilient and adaptive governance structures are at the core of Indigenous Australians' success as the oldest continuing cultures in the world. These structures incorporate rules governing everyday life, marriage, gender roles, family structure, hunting and trade, land and resource use, leadership, ceremony and ways of behaving. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have many diverse and unique forms of governance based on their history, environment and culture. Even though different organisations have different governance practices, many cultural values and traditions are shared. Similarly, while Indigenous organisations operate across a broad spectrum of sectors and locations, they share many of the same governance issues and challenges, and benefit from sharing solutions.

Western governance systems imported to Australia by the British have their own particular traditions and values that are different to those of Indigenous societies. Today, this overlap of systems continues, with many Indigenous peoples living under two systems of governance – governance based on culture and traditional law, and western governance. The challenge many communities face is adapting to these 'two ways' successfully in a manner that reflects their needs and aspirations.

History has shown that the most successful communities and societies are those that have designed and implemented their own forms of governance in tune with their values and conditions. They have created their own rules, made their own decisions and carried out their own plans. Similarly, Indigenous organisations need to develop their own systems of governance that incorporate the culture and traditions of the community they serve, while still responding to the formal requirements of the wider governance environment. Organisations that do this are models of success and much can be learnt from their good governance practices.

Good Indigenous governance, evidence tells us, is critical to communities addressing their own issues in a manner that facilitates sustainable positive development. Good Indigenous governance, as you'll see in this handbook, develops community capacity, fosters leadership, models success and influences policy. Where communities are supported in building stable, capable and legitimate governing institutions improvements in other aspects of community life will follow.

The Indigenous Governance Awards

The Indigenous Governance Awards were created by Reconciliation Australia in partnership with BHP Billiton to identify, celebrate and promote effective Indigenous governance. These biennial awards are part of a wider Indigenous governance program that includes Sharing Success Workshops, the Indigenous Community Governance Research Project and the development of a web-based Indigenous Governance Toolkit.

In the award years to date (2005, 2006 and 2008) 142 applications were received from across the country, and a total of \$90,000 was awarded to Indigenous organisations to further their development. The achievements of the applicants, finalists and winners were widely reported in the Indigenous media. Moreover, the finalists have also been promoted through the Productivity Commission's 2007 and 2009 *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators* reports, the Awards website and a range of resources including the first and second *Celebrating Indigenous Governance* book. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, in a statement to Parliament in early 2009, applauded the success of the best Indigenous organisations as recognised by the Indigenous Governance Awards, praising them for outclassing mainstream organisations and enterprises in Australia.

Reconciliation Australia draws on the achievements of the finalists and applicants to highlight Indigenous success and to positively influence policy and opinion. As well as recognising and acknowledging good practice in

Indigenous governance, the Awards increase understanding of the significance and benefits of good governance and inspire people to invest in it. Moreover it promotes innovative models and practices, and allows organisations to share and transfer practical information and ideas.

Showcasing and promoting Indigenous achievement to the broader Australian community is another great by-product of the Awards. The examples of success from the IGA play an important role in challenging negative and damaging stereotypes of Indigenous Australians– shining a light on good news in an area where many are so familiar with the bad.

The Awards are open to incorporated Indigenous organisations nationwide that are at least 51% Indigenous owned. As in previous years, in 2008 there were two categories – organisations established for less than 10 years (Category A) and organisations established for more than 10 years (Category B). In each category the national winner received \$10,000 and the highly commended award winner received \$5,000.

Applicants were required to outline how their organisation makes and carries out decisions, solves problems, develops leaders, embeds culture and plans for the future. A review committee appraised the applications and made recommendations for further assessment.



Image: BHP Billiton's Geoff Walsh (l), Minister Jenny Macklin (centre) and IGA Chair Mick Dodson (r) share the spotlight with the 2008 Indigenous Governance Award winners Edwina Circuit (Warakurna Artists) and Micky Wunungmurra and Cathy Hunt (Traditional Credit Union).

The independent judging panel (see page 80) shortlisted eight finalists and conducted site visits to more thoroughly assess each organisation in their own environment. At the conclusion of the awards process, the finalists were flown to Melbourne for an informal workshop with the judging panel before the winners were announced at the presentation event.

At each stage of the process the applicants were assessed against the following criteria:

1. How legitimate, representative and accountable is the governing body?
2. How effectively does the administration function?
3. Are effective dispute resolution systems in place?
4. What is the level of commitment to leadership development?
5. How does the organisation's governance model reflect the cultural norms and values of its members?
6. What is the level of strategic planning ability?

In 2008, the 37 applicants were from all states and territories except Tasmania, with most entries coming from New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Unlike 2006, when health was the largest sector represented, in 2008 almost half of the organisations were established as representative groups for local Indigenous communities. The other applicants were involved in areas such as culture, economic development and employment, local or regional government, education and training, media, land-related issues and health. The most common source of core funding (84%) was government, although six applicants were entirely privately funded.

By entering the 2008 Awards, the applicants demonstrated knowledge of and respect for good governance. Understanding of governance is reflected in their everyday practise and their achievements. Good governance gives these organisations the foundation for supporting their community's welfare & basic human rights - they can administer essential programs and deliver services, manage human, land and cultural resources, and negotiate with other organisations and governments. Communities can adapt and develop because of the strengths of the applicants' governance practices.



Key elements of good governance

In June and July 2008, members of the Award's judging panel visited each of the finalists in their communities and spent a day meeting with members of the organisation's governing body, management and staff as well as with external stakeholders such as clients, members, partners and funding bodies. The judging panel conducted similar visits with the 2005 and 2006 finalists and every year they have noted a range of key elements that were common to most, or all, of the finalist organisations. While all 142 organisations who have applied for the Indigenous Governance Awards have their own unique governance model to match the diversity of the organisations themselves and

communities in which they operate, it is possible to identify some common elements of success.

Listed here are some of these key elements that have contributed to good Indigenous governance, and are therefore important factors in the success of Indigenous organisations. When these factors are understood and form an organisation's governance foundations, they provide it with authority, legitimacy, resources and accountability. They also provide a balance between their traditional cultural governance and formal requirements of the wider governance environment.

Image: Yirra Yaakin



Cultural norms and values

The organisation (governing body, management and staff) is able to operate effectively in 'two worlds' - it is responsive and accountable to both the blackfella community and to whitefella requirements.

Ongoing support is provided by the community and gives the organisation the cultural legitimacy it needs to operate.

Indigenous ways of doing business are incorporated into the organisation's rules, structures, values and processes. Often the governing body reflects the community's social structures.

A positive working environment is created that is warm and welcoming with appropriate cultural values so that staff feel empowered and community members feel engaged. Often a sense of family is nurtured. The organisation is inclusive of the different Indigenous groupings in the area as well as of non-Indigenous people.

Staff participate in cultural awareness training. The organisation recognises the cultural life of staff and provisions are made for family and ceremonial events.

The organisation actively recruits and trains Indigenous staff and creates career pathways for them.

The organisation undertakes ongoing consultation with community members who have a real say in the way the organisation does its work, and in the organisation's future planning.

The relationship between the governing body and the community's traditional decision-making arrangements is clear, giving the governing body the legitimacy it needs to function.

Governing body

There is a balance on the governing body between community representation (age, gender, background, region etc) and the expertise and experience needed to govern effectively.

The governing body provides positive and confident leadership with a clear vision, and a commitment to achieving that vision. It doesn't engage in, and isn't influenced by, local politics.

The organisation has a confident and able governing body with plenty of enthusiasm and passion, and an accessible, hands-on chairperson.

The governing body meets regularly (e.g. monthly, every six weeks, every three months etc.) and holds an Annual General Meeting.

Special efforts are made when required to enable governing body members to understand the issues they are dealing with so that they are fully informed and considered decisions can be made. Successful organisations have strong professional relations between the CEO and the governing body, each being clear about their roles and how to exercise them fully and appropriately.

There are good systems in place for maintaining continuity and skills on the governing body such as staggered elections, mentoring of new members, developing potential members and succession planning.

Frameworks and tools such as strategic direction documents, guides and plans are in place which help the governing body make good decisions. There are also policies and practices to avoid conflicts of interest. Where decisions are difficult or deadlocked, further information or advice from elders or other parties can be sought.

The governing body, staff and others are aware of the systems, policies and procedures that are in place to clarify roles and responsibilities, and to set standards of how the organisation conducts its business.

The organisation has their accounts audited annually and produces an Annual Report.

There is good financial management through preparation of a clear budget each year, regular financial reports to the governing body, and policies outlining financial procedures and delegations (e.g. who can spend what, who can sign cheques etc).





Making and implementing decisions

There is a clear separation of strategic and operational decision-making, and an ability to appraise options and risks in making any decision. Decisions are made democratically, often by processes which develop a consensus after first clarifying what the decision is about and what is at stake.

Staff and communities know what decisions have been made, and decisions can be reviewed by the governing body as needed. There is a record of decisions made at each governing body meeting, and this information is circulated to everyone who needs it to ensure decisions are acted upon.

Clear and well-developed planning systems flow from a broad long-term strategic plan, through a more detailed business plan, into shorter-term workplans for individual units or staff.

Staff and management are confident in each other and there is a culture of cooperation. Staff feel they are supported by the governing body and trusted by management.

The organisation's staff are committed to their work and they understand, share and deliver the vision of the organisation. There is a feeling of unity and team spirit among staff.

Conflict resolution

Operational policies, procedures and codes of conduct are in place to guide staff to help prevent conflicts and crises by avoiding misunderstandings, and to guide appropriate action when problems arise.

Systems are established to receive and deal with complaints from staff and clients, and to proactively invite suggestions for improvement. Often these approaches are tiered, ie. the complaint is first dealt with at the lowest level necessary in the organisation, and if that fails to resolve it, the matter is escalated to increasingly higher levels.

Leadership development

Professional training and development is provided for the staff, and compulsory governance training for governing body members.

Clear performance management systems are in place to monitor and support staff so they have the necessary skills to action decisions and access training as required. The best organisations have systematic, planned approaches to staff training, mentoring and development which begin at induction. At each stage people acquire the skills to perform their job and progress through the organisation.

The organisation invests in human development of the governing body, staff, youth and potential leaders in a multitude of ways, such as by linking elders with younger people and providing training and mentoring.

There are mechanisms for youth participation in the organisation's governance and programs, and opportunities for external leadership development.

The organisation is not over-managed. Clear guidelines and frameworks are set with the confidence that staff will get on with the job, often in small teams, supporting each other. Staff usually have chosen to work where they do because their values align with the organisation's mission, and they want to make a difference in their community.

Future planning

The organisation is seen by potential partners and key external stakeholders as having financial, administrative and organisational credibility.

Strategies are developed for greater self-reliance to enable the organisation to be more self-determining, and more able to expand or diversify by providing the kinds of services and programs needed by their communities and clients.

The organisation is creative and finds appropriate models and solutions to challenges and difficulties. It is flexible, adaptable and able to learn from experience.

Profiles of the finalists 2008 Indigenous Governance Awards





Warakurna Artists, WA

Winner of the 2008 National Indigenous Governance Award

Category A: Organisations established for less than 10 years

Established in 2004 in Warakurna, a tiny community in the remote Ngaanyatjarra lands of Western Australia, Warakurna Artists is a locally owned and managed Indigenous arts enterprise that supports the production and marketing of diverse, colourful, culturally intense and artistically rich works of art. The organisation, which also serves the nearby community of Wanarn, returns a broad range of benefits to the artists and residents of the region such as providing access to independent income, sharing small business experience and facilitating equitable engagement with mainstream markets.

Warakurna Artists supports first time, mid-career and established artists to access the art market while contributing to important community outcomes. One of Warakurna's core aims is to use painting as a vehicle for the sharing and transmission of culture in the community between individuals, families and generations. Warakurna also supports and engages the elderly, pre-school and school children. The business provides opportunities for employment and development through the production and sale of artworks.

One of the building blocks of Warakurna Artists is their long-term emphasis on governance training and highly participatory governance processes. Each year the artists and executive committee participate in the Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training program; an experience cultivating skills, confidence and other professional development opportunities. It gives Warakurna Artists high quality, culturally appropriate, fully translated governance training and information and has created strong regional relationships and role models. The training has helped build confident executive committees across the region, ensuring better management of their enterprises and increased participation of all members in the management of their organisations.

"Their governance protects the artists, art centre, stories and country."

Comment by stakeholder



JUDGES' COMMENTS

Warakurna Artists is a very impressive operation. It is run by the artists who are the main beneficiaries for the services it offers, and there is only one full time staff member and two to four part-time staff periodically.

The artists are well trained in governance and that is a great strength of the organisation. They represent an expanding opportunity for artists in remote communities to enhance their economic development and to deliver benefits to all members of their community. Throughout the organisation they have a sustained commitment to leadership and governance excellence – from the governing committee, the artists and the staff.

The considerable strength of the organisation is revealed in the courageous stance taken in relation to ethical dealing in Indigenous art. The Board, through its leadership, plays an important role in helping to resist the predatory purchase practices allegedly engaged in by some merchants.

Warakurna Artists is having a positive impact on the community as a whole with increased school attendance and better health outcomes. This is because the organisation provides meaning (and meaningful engagement) as well as income. The organisation helps to keep culture strong in a contemporary way and is making a positive contribution to the overall strength of its community.

The organisation has a credible business plan with a long term vision – a clear commitment to look beyond short-term (bottom line) issues in favour of adopting long-term goals.

Warakurna Artists is a leading best practice organisation that is founded on good governance.

SOME KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

The organisation is owned and operated by the artists.

Sustained commitment to good governance and governance training.

The standard of administration is ethical and highly transparent.

Management is competent, skilled and capable.

Culture and Country are successfully integrated into the business, with paintings contributing to the maintenance and transmission of culture.

The involvement of young people with clear policies and practices directed towards the engagement of the next generation via painting.

Impacts beyond the WA arts community.



Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation, WA

Winner of the 2008 Highly Commended Award
Category A: Organisations established for less than 10 years

In 2005, the Miriuwung Gajerrong people of the East Kimberley negotiated an Indigenous land use agreement in relation to the expansion of the Ord River irrigation area. Out of this process, the Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Corporation (MG Corporation) was born, established to receive and manage the benefits of development on their country. MG Corporation also works to keep Miriuwung Gajerrong law and culture alive and strong, and to recognise the authority of, and to work with, the Kariel or elders. MG Corporation is also responsible for implementing the Ord Final Agreement, and for developing the benefits and opportunities that flow from it on behalf of the Miriuwung Gajerrong people. This includes building a secure economic future as well as protecting the social and cultural wellbeing of the MG people.

MG Corp has a complex governance structure with 32 members on the governing committee, made up of two representatives from each of the 16 dawang, or traditional land areas that come together under the agreement. The management group consists of five governing committee members and the CEO, and is responsible for the daily running of the organisation. Representatives of the governing committee also sit on a number of corporate entities or unincorporated committees that carry out specific functions under the overall leadership of MG Corp.

"MG Corp is breaking down the outdated attitudes and approaches to the delivery of services to Aboriginal people."

Comment from stakeholder



JUDGES' COMMENTS

MG Corp is an organisation that has purposely aligned its structure with its cultural values, while also making sure that it fits in the kartiya (whitefella) world. The structure is complex but it suits their needs and represents their cultural practises. All members have a good knowledge of the structure, what the organisation is developing and its objectives.

The Governing Committee is representative of each dawang (traditional land area). This has enabled differences to be put aside and brings all the dawang together to benefit members of all the traditional owner groups, ensuring that the structure is accountable.

The challenge they believe they will overcome by modifying their cultural framework to comply with changes to the Aboriginal Corporations Act, signifies their resilience and commitment to finding solutions.

MG Corp's commitment to supporting traditional leadership and knowledge strengthens the organisation. Regional elders are heavily involved in decision making and mentoring, with Kariel (senior members) at the top. Cultural pride and respect is shown throughout their deliberations.

SOME KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Representative and accountable structure of the organisation.

Cultural model with deference to the elders and policies developed to reflect culture and laws.

Committee have a strong sense that economic development is a key to their ongoing sustainability and future.

Long term planning and finding ways to achieve their vision and goals.

Rapidly advancing capacity to do the work even with a lack of personnel.

Code of conduct manual and conflict of interest process in place.



Murrijabree Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Association, QLD

2008 Finalist

Category A: Organisations established for less than 10 years

Murrijabree was created in 2004 to support the Indigenous people of Deception Bay by representing them at state and federal levels and improving local conditions. The organisation seeks to provide a strong voice for the community through individual representation as well as collaborations with other organisations that promote the rights, needs and aspirations of the local people.

To achieve this vision, Murrijabree has an open door policy and members of the community are consulted and their opinions sought on day to day issues. It also acts as an important meeting place for local people of all cultures and backgrounds, where they are encouraged to feel that they are an accepted part of the local community.

Murrijabree works with younger generations to strengthen their pride in their Indigenous heritage and identity. The organisation runs a number of programs such as the Gundooos playgroup, where Aunties offer advice and support to young parents. Murrijabree also hosts an annual event for Indigenous school children to participate in sporting and cultural activities, and organises camping excursions for young people to learn more about their culture.

For older members of the community Murrijabree provides advice and assistance on accessing services and also liaises with official bodies on behalf of community members. It encourages community pride in local traditional customs by running women's groups that concentrate on dancing and men's groups that revive woodworking and other traditional skills. These groups are often invited to perform at events and ceremonies, enabling Murrijabree facilitate improved relations with the broader community.

"Their boomerang is bringing us all in."

Comment from stakeholder



JUDGES' COMMENTS

Murrijabree is a new organisation that is still learning. It has progressed exponentially in a short period of time and it is an organisation that is still building and evolving. It's managing identity and other issues in the local district and it appears to be effective and changing community attitudes.

Murrijabree has instilled a sense of pride and inclusion in the Indigenous peoples of the district. It has presented a positive image for the Indigenous community and broken down many barriers that have been standing in the way of inclusion. The organisation is very much in touch with the community and has earned a high level of trust.

With a focus on the future Murrijabree strives to involve the whole community and is committed to children, youth and leadership. It is realistic about the future challenges it confronts, and there is a confidence that it is an organisation that would do the right thing by its community and its stakeholders.

Murrijabree is an impressive grass roots organisation with a strong mission, excellent leadership and a high level of staff commitment. For an organisation of its size and brief history it is doing an enormous amount with few resources. It's a highly respected organisation with integrity and accountability, and is well regarded by stakeholders for its professionalism and success in achieving goals.

SOME KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Impressive grass roots accountability, with clear goals and mission, and a variety of successful ventures.

Measured, progressive expansion of functions, while experience gained and capacity developed.

Those involved in the organisation are seen as representative of the community and they network well with other organisations.

Stakeholders view it as having brought a sense of ownership, connection and pride to the area.

Overwhelmingly positive connection with the community who see it as having surpassed expectations.

It has made huge progress in a short time in the area of governance.



Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre, NSW

2008 Finalist

Category A: Organisations established for less than 10 years

In 1990, Aboriginal people from the Riverina region in southern NSW identified the need for a culturally based residential centre for Aboriginal boys to provide an alternative to juvenile detention. Tirkandi Inaburra was created nearly 10 years later as an early intervention centre for Indigenous boys at risk of becoming involved in the justice system. It provides them with an opportunity to learn, grow and change in a supportive environment.

Tirkandi Inaburra is a residential centre for 12 to 15 year old Indigenous boys that delivers an innovative learning program. It houses 16 boys on a voluntary basis for three to six months while they take part in on site educational, recreational and cultural programs. Programs are linked to culture, agriculture and land care activities, aimed at developing participants' skills and strengthening their cultural identity and self-confidence. The Centre empowers participants to develop and draw on their own resilience in order to take responsibility for their lives, and to develop strategies to deal with their problems whilst promoting cultural pride, identity and self-esteem. Tirkandi works in partnership with local Indigenous communities, related services and the NSW Government to provide a culturally appropriate service.

The Centre has a unique governance model. Its parent body, the Management Committee, is elected annually and a position is reserved for both an elder and a young person. The Management Board consisting of the office bearers of the Management Committee, the Executive Officer and representatives of the various government agencies involved with the Centre are delegated to manage its daily operations.

"The strength of the organisation is the passion to change the lives of the boys who come here."

Comment from stakeholder



JUDGES' COMMENTS

Tirkandi Inaburra has a unique governance model with three tiers of management, a parent body (the Management Committee), a sub-committee (the Management Board) and an Executive Officer which adds to the strength of the organisation. There was no model to copy and its uniqueness perhaps could be replicated elsewhere.

Tirkandi Inaburra is clearly about the boys and turning their lives around. Cultural identity and respect is at the heart of what Tirkandi does. The project is a learning-on-the-job proposition, testing and discovering what works and what does not. The outcomes in behavioural shift among the boys and for each individual are quite astounding. The real challenge is to address the environment the boys go back into.

This is a governance model that keeps both the community and the government accountable.

SOME KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Collaborative approach.

Keeping the government accountable.

The family-like nature of the place.

Culture of respect.

Capacity to communicate openly with the community.

Youthful membership.



Traditional Credit Union, NT

Winner of the 2008 National Indigenous Governance Award

Category B: Organisations established for more than 10 years

Founded in 1994 in the small community of Milingimbi, 500km east of Darwin, the Traditional Credit Union (TCU) was formed in response to the number of big banks that had withdrawn their services from remote areas. It was created through the collaboration of community elders, the local council and the Arnhem Land Progress Association, with funding from the Northern Territory Government.

The TCU's core business is the provision of personalised quality financial services for Indigenous people and organisations in remote communities based on a respect for the cultural heritage of Indigenous Australians. The 13,000 members of the 12 branches across the Top End are shareholders and owners of \$10 million in deposits and nearly half a million dollars in loans.

As well as offering normal financial services, TCU plays an important role in providing financial literacy training and financial counselling to its members and in the communities it services. They employ both a financial literacy educator and a financial counsellor, and 85% of their staff are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. TCU shows a commitment to developing the capacity of Indigenous staff through supporting training and advancement.

TCU is governed by a Board of directors that meets at least quarterly. The Board is a combination of Indigenous and non-Indigenous directors reflecting a broad range of expertise. The Indigenous directors represent different communities and language groups in the region serviced by TCU.

**"TCU is committed
to our mob."**

Comment from a staff
member



JUDGES' COMMENTS

TCU is an organisation that stands up to the accountability of the banking industry as well as the accountability of its diverse members. It is organised around offering personalised quality financial services in remote communities as well as respecting the cultural values and heritage of the Indigenous peoples it serves. The ability of the TCU to balance cultural values in a regulatory environment showcases the strength of this organisation to manage in 'two worlds'.

This is a professional Indigenous owned and run financial service that has worked under extreme pressures and continues to make a profit.

The National Australia Bank has provided the TCU with a \$1million interest free loan, a clear demonstration of the trust and confidence in them after a rigorous assessment process. By meeting a need where no-one else does, the TCU has created a model for banking services in remote communities that other banks could utilise and put it in any location and it would succeed.

The management and staff are committed to TCU and they provide effective customer focused service. Their commitment to providing quality accredited training to remote communities is commendable. Staffing branches with local people has many advantages such as attracting new membership and staff who speak local languages.

The TCU has also developed member specific products and procedures such as their unique identification process. Cultural practises are accepted and respected and branches will close for ceremonial purposes.

SOME KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Cultural considerations come first.

Committed to community education and ongoing training opportunities with staff identified for development and promotion.

Dedication to effective communication throughout the organisation.

Celebration of successes and achievements.

Governing body has wide ranging expertise and diverse cultural backgrounds.

AGM and meetings rotate between communities.



South West Aboriginal Medical Service, WA

Winner of the 2008 Highly Commended Award

Category B: Organisations established for more than 10 years

Created in 1997, South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) provides a multi-faceted health service for Indigenous people in the south-west of Western Australia. SWAMS ensures that the Noongar people living in Bunbury and surrounds have a community controlled health organisation founded on the principles of self-determination, empowerment and freedom of choice.

SWAMS prides itself on being a culturally appropriate, Aboriginal controlled health service that not only functions as a medical provider but also a space for health promotion and as an agent for Aboriginal health advocacy. It is also dedicated to supporting and encouraging the maintenance and renewal of traditional Aboriginal medicine and healing. SWAMS works in partnership with likeminded organisations, including Aboriginal health worker training providers.

SWAMS is run by a Governing Committee with an ongoing focus on governance training. Before each Governing Committee meeting, the Committee receives governance training to keep them up to date.

“SWAMS make you feel safe, they put people first.”

Comment from stakeholder



JUDGES' COMMENTS

SWAMS is a professionally run service, dedicated to its many tasks. It has recovered well from past problems. At one time it was at considerable risk and hard management decisions were made to save the organisation. This shows the great success of the recent (and ongoing) program of change management. It is clear it now has the full confidence of the community, and having rebuilt itself, SWAMS is a credit to that community.

SWAMS is committed to responding to the real needs of the community, and it engages with elders to ensure that all interventions are culturally appropriate and therefore effective.

SWAMS plays a central and effective role in its funded business but also engages more widely, advocating and representing Indigenous issues to both the Aboriginal and the wider community.

The organisation is well aware of the risks of relying on individuals such as the accountant and CEO, and the challenges in employing and retaining doctors. Accordingly, it has developed appropriate risk management strategies as well as mitigating loss of corporate knowledge by moving towards staggering Board appointments.

There is a strong commitment by the Board and CEO to build capacity in the Noongar community. The use of a ward system for Board representation has been successful in rising above sectional (family) interests.

SOME KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Governance training for Governing Committee on an annual basis.

Succession plan encourages youth involvement.

Excellent outreach practices.

Demonstrated knowledge, understanding and application of good governance - a learning organisation.

General improvement in health of Indigenous school children that also contributes to better attendance at school.

Strong leadership at all levels of the organisation and within the community.



Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi, NT

2008 Finalist

Category B: Organisations established for more than 10 years

Waltja's origins were in the Central Australian Family Resource Centre (FRC) based in the remote Aboriginal community, Papunya. In 1991, the Commonwealth Government created FRCs across Australia as part of its national family strategy. This program provided funding to organisations assisting families in the areas of advocacy, development of family services, information provision, education and training and needs identification. After funding problems and a need to be re-established, the Papunya FRC was replaced by Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi, an organisation designed to support community development and self-determination for remote Aboriginal communities in central Australia.

Waltja, which means 'family' in many Central Australian languages, provides or supports a variety of services including child care, youth programs, aged care, disability services, management support for women's centres, and a range of training services. The organisation offers training for, and supports the improvement of community services that provide employment and professional development for local Aboriginal people. Not only is Waltja committed to supporting community development and self-determination for Aboriginal communities, but it also seeks to provide training in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

Waltja is driven by a Management Committee of traditional Aboriginal women from a geographically, linguistically and culturally diverse spread of remote Central Australian communities. The Management Committee is supported by an Executive Committee, who meets every six weeks and ensures the overarching aims set by the Management Committee are realised in Waltja's work.

"Waltja is a community driven, grassroots support service for Indigenous people in Central Australia that is governed by Indigenous people in Central Australia".

Comment from stakeholder



JUDGES' COMMENTS

Overall this is a well-governed organisation providing an invaluable resource not only for the community but for government and key stakeholders.

The community was also very reliant on them and trusted the organisation to deliver their services to a very good standard whether it is in training or advocating on their behalf.

Their respect for their cultural practises is evident in the way they are governed. The organisation and its staff have community trust. This is a good indication that they are governed by a legitimate body.

The committee is accountable and reflect the cultural norms and values of the members.

Resources developed and programs being delivered seem appropriate for the client group and there is a strong commitment to providing services and training outreach to the communities. Waltja is an efficient organisation that is result orientated and creative – it is an outstanding example of good governance.

SOME KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Governing committee members' strength lies in their community skills and special interests i.e. childcare, aged care, disability.

The organisation is driven by and promotes the empowerment of Aboriginal women.

Their governance style is truly democratic; everyone's opinion is valued and heard.

There is an ongoing staff training and capacity development focus.

Staff feel that the Management Committee is legitimate and very strong.



Yirra Yaakin Aboriginal Corporation, WA 2008 Finalist

Category B: Organisations established for more than 10 years

Yirra Yaakin evolved from an Aboriginal youth workshop program run by the Barking Gecko Theatre Company in Perth which highlighted the need for an Aboriginal-controlled theatre company in Western Australia where Aboriginal people could tell their own stories in their own way. The original workshop participants came up with the name Yirra Yaakin, which is Noongar for Stand Tall, because that's the founding vision of the theatre company: to help Aboriginal people stand tall through proudly celebrating their stories and culture.

Since 1993, Yirra Yaakin's mission has been to enable Aboriginal communities to continue to tell and perform their own stories and to support the Aboriginal arts community. The company has three areas of operation: a professional theatre program, a community program, and a development program.

The professional program involves main stage theatrical productions written, directed and performed by Indigenous artists. It brings authentic Aboriginal stories to the stage, to be enjoyed by audiences in communities, mainstream theatres and festivals around the world. Yirra Yaakin also tours plays based on dreaming stories to schools throughout WA, promoting Aboriginal culture, acceptance and reconciliation.

The community program involves issues-based theatre performances and workshops that tackle specific social issues in the community. The development program aims to ensure the company has trainees learning skills to work in the theatre industry.

**"We have learnt
from adversity and
worked our way
through challenges."**

Comment from staff member



JUDGES' COMMENTS

Yirra Yaakin is one of the most respected and articulate voices in the local arts community for the Indigenous people of WA. Their advice is sought from Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups on issues such as cultural protocols, reconciliation and land rights.

Their productions are enjoyed by non-Indigenous and Indigenous people in a way that is positive, humorous and relevant as well as being powerful and strong.

All work for the funding body is provided in a timely, well organised and informative manner. Staff are highly skilled and professional managers in both a financial and organisational sense.

SOME KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Commitment to prudent financial management (modest surpluses over last three years and into the future).

Alliances with other Aboriginal theatre groups and the establishment of a local arts community.

Management are aligned with Board thinking and share their vision.

Passion for developing staff and supporting clients.

Forward-looking strategies for embracing film and television.

What works: Lessons from the 2008 Indigenous Governance Awards

Image: Yirra Yaakin





Image: Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi

Drawing on the applications in the 2008 Indigenous Governance Awards, this resource highlights ideas and practices that are proving successful for a broad range of community organisations.

This section focuses on six key elements of good governance:

- 1) Governing body
- 2) Making and implementing decisions
- 3) Conflict resolution
- 4) Leadership development
- 5) Cultural norms and values
- 6) Future planning.

These elements will be explained and illustrated by examples of what they look like in action. Each year in the IGA finalists display innovative and successful approaches to the facets of good Indigenous governance, and the 2008 Awards were no different. The examples are both *ideas that work* offering short, realistic possibilities for implementing every day governance elements and *how to's*, offering longer case studies with an in-depth explanation of core governance competencies. For Indigenous organisations looking for guidance in their governance, these are real models of success from communities across Australia that can inspire and encourage others.



1 Governing body



A governing body is the group of people given the power and authority to govern an organisation. They are elected by the members of the organisation through an agreed procedure such as voting or by traditional Indigenous processes. Governing bodies come in all shapes and sizes, and can take the form of a Board, a council or a committee.

As representatives of the organisation, the governing body must be able to speak on behalf of all the members, as well as protect their rights, interests and well-being. The mix of people on a governing body should reflect the broad diversity of the members of the community and the organisation. They must also be able to perform the job of governing with the right mix of skills, experience and expertise. It is important that the members of a governing body understand and are committed to their role as ethical leaders, and to their legal, moral and cultural responsibilities to their organisation and members.

A governing body needs to have legitimacy to function effectively. A good governing body draws cultural and social legitimacy from the community it represents and its members. It also must be legally and functionally legitimate, that is, it must comply with the various legislative and funding rules it operates under. Overall legitimacy comes from being accountable to all stakeholders, from funders, to lawmakers, to the community itself.

The governing body has specific roles and responsibilities that all its members need to be aware of and committed to. Principally, the governing body must guide the organisation while keeping the interests of all its members at heart. Then, by establishing the overall goals of the organisation, it can create the rules by which the organisation works to achieve those goals. The governing body must be able to clearly and effectively communicate these goals to the organisation's management.

Power and authority in an organisation are shared by the governing body and the management and there needs to be a clear separation of these powers. The governing body is responsible for making policy and setting the strategic direction of the organisation, and management's role is to implement those policies as effectively as possible. While they have separate roles, the governing body and management must collaborate and work as a leadership team to ensure the smooth operation of the organisation. Through cooperation and constant communication, they can effectively ensure that the organisation isn't steering too far away from its goals and objectives and that neither the management nor the Board are taking advantage of the power they hold.



A governing body needs to have legitimacy to function effectively

Image: Murriajabree ATSI Association

Choosing a governing body

Nearly all of the 2008 IGA applicants use a process of nominations and voting to elect their governing body. Those who vote can include members of the Board (for new members), financial members of the organisation and general members.

The applicants displayed diverse selection criteria for governing body members including clans, families, language or skin groups, wards, regions, associations or other community controlled organisations. A number of the Boards also included a staff member or employee representative. What most nominees understood is that accountability and legitimacy are achieved when a governing body is structured to be representative of the different groups it serves.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Central Queensland Indigenous Development Ltd office holders are elected by nominating and being voted in by members of the Board. Each member is a prominent member of their community and involved in the decision making process for their region.

At present **Ganambarra Ltd** has five Board members. Four Board members represent various Indigenous organisations and one Board member is an employee representative.

Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre Inc's parent body is known as the Management Committee and it has eight members who are all Indigenous and elected at each AGM. The Committee has two designated positions, for an elder representative and a youth representative.



Image: Tirkandi Inaburra

Size of governing body

When deciding on the size of the governing body, organisations should be mindful of the scope of their business, the composition of the community or membership they represent and their geographical scope. This year many of the organisations who applied had larger governing structures, especially the health or community organisations which required broad and diverse community representation.

IDEAS THAT WORK

The management of **Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi** is a partnership between the Management Committee members, the Executive and the Manager with the support of all other Waltja personnel. Every 12 months, Waltja holds its Annual General Meeting, at which a Management Committee of no less than 22 people is elected from its membership. A majority of Management Committee members must be appointed from remote communities. There are always two committee members elected together from a community, so that they can support and encourage each other, and travel together. This is a good way for more experienced committee members to mentor new women leaders.

Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Co-Operative Ltd (WAMS) is a non-profit, Aboriginal community controlled health organisation where members vote for the nine Directors annually. Membership is open to all people over eighteen years of age. Under the WAMS constitution, non-Aboriginal people have voting rights but are not eligible to stand for a position on the Board of Directors. This enables non-Aboriginal participation in the design and development of services without compromising the philosophy of Aboriginal self-determination. The Board has a Chairperson and eight Directors.

Frequency of governing body meetings

In deciding on the frequency of meetings, an organisation needs to be aware of time, money and the capacities of its governing body. If meetings are going to be particularly long, or Board members must travel long distances to reach meeting locations, some organisations have fewer meetings. If Board members are elderly or frail (especially elders) organisations should take this into account also.



2008 applicants displayed a wide variety of structures for their governing body's change and continuity

For most of the organisations that applied, governing Board meetings were fortnightly (smaller bodies), monthly or quarterly. Some also met more if there was an unexpected matter of particular concern to discuss. Organisations should keep in mind the necessity of achieving a quorum when they plan for their meetings.

Change and continuity

Organisations frequently hold annual elections but this doesn't mean that all governing body members change, as those people who have served well are usually re-elected. Changing governing body members can contribute to 'refreshing' a governing body and ensuring responsibilities are spread out and new opportunities are created. It can be concerning when turnover is too high as the Board can lose too much capacity and organisational knowledge. It can also be problematic when change is too infrequent, with a lack of 'new blood' and transfer of skills and knowledge. Well governed organisations have a balance of old and new members, often with a focus on succession-planning and transferring organisation knowledge.

To achieve this balance there needs to be a coherent election process as well as time frame for governing body membership. 2008 applicants displayed a wide variety of structures for their governing body's change and continuity. Some organisations conducted elections for the entire body every year or second year while others elected only half the body at one election and the other half at the next. This second method has proven to be particularly successful for succession and continuity as it ensures that there are always people involved who know what's going on. The length of time people serve on Boards also differed according to organisation needs. Additionally some organisations had extra individuals or sub committees involved in the Board who may not have voting rights but could provide particular expertise, information about community priorities, and wider communities involved.

IDEAS THAT WORK

In 2004, amendments to the governance of **Yirra Yaakin Aboriginal Corporation** were enacted through changes to the company constitution. This looked to develop a succession process for all Board members to avoid members sitting in perpetuity and ensure a skills transfer mechanism was in place to induct new members. A pooling system of no more than 30 members is in place to ensure that necessary skills are available to the company and seconded as required. A three-year, two-year and one-year rotational system is in place to support the skills transfer, retain corporate memory and ensure the staged departure of Board members as a considered and strategic process.

Wurli Wurlijang Aboriginal Corporation health service is governed by a Board of directors comprising 16 community members of the incorporated association. The elections of members to the Board occur every two years and a nominated number of positions on the Board are reserved for each of the communities within the health services community of interest, thereby ensuring all communities have a voice on the Wurli Wurlijang Board.

Financial decision-making

Next to strategic direction, the management of an organisation's finances are the governing body's key role. They need to plan for the future, transparently acquit funding and monitor income and expenditure. The financial policies and procedures must also be robust and transparent to protect against misappropriation or corruption. An organisation's expenditure, income, assets and liabilities must all be clearly accounted for and organised so that employees know who has the authority over which financial areas. It's also necessary so the organisation can have identifiable plans for maintaining financial security. To guarantee that this is achieved and that the organisation always has sufficient funds, the Board has two critical roles.

They must both regularly supervise all financial components of the company, and annually employ a certified and independent auditor to assess the organisation's accounts.

Most of the organisations that applied for the awards demonstrated robust systems of financial responsibility and accountability. Generally there was a clear distinction between the supervision of daily finances by the CEO or General Manager and large-scale finances, especially major project funding, which were administered by the Board. Nearly all of this year's applicants had a payment system requiring two signatories on cheques, with those signatories determined to ensure maximum transparency and accountability. Many organisations have specialist financial subcommittees with responsibilities for overseeing budgeting, bookkeeping and annual auditing as well as compiling annual and financial reports.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre Inc has a distinct separation of powers in relation to expenditure and payments. Expenditure is approved by the Administration Manager and the Executive Officer in accordance with delegated limits. Payments are approved in line with the budget by an independent Finance Manager (certified accountant) and the Executive Officer.

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service Inc's company accountant attends every third finance committee meeting. Over and under-spends in budget lines of more than 5% in any one month on one budget line (or project line) are flagged for the Board's attention.

The Aboriginal Community Development Officer at **Mingaletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation** may authorize the purchase of materials and equipment (up to the amount of \$500) required for the day-to-day operation of the office that are within the budget of the relevant project. Expenditure for larger items must be approved by Mingaletta's Board and if appropriate, three quotes should be obtained for the said item.



Image: Traditional Credit Union

Accountability tools

It's critical for organisations to have processes of accountability which ensure their internal and external stakeholders have the opportunity to see financial and progress reports, contribute to planning, and ask questions of the governing body and management. These processes are required of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations and when done well, help strengthen the organisation and its legitimacy.

A governing body must ensure an effective structure for these processes, most commonly in the form of Annual General Meetings (AGM). At the AGM the governing body can formally report about activities, endorse any significant change in structure or practice such as amending the constitution, present a set of financial accounts, appoint an auditor for the coming year, answer any questions, and hold elections as required. All of the 2008 organisations required to hold an AGM did so, and more than two thirds published Annual Reports.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Warakurna Artists mixes high-level financial and commercial dealings with cultural and community engagement. This means the Executive Committee has considerable responsibilities in both areas. The Executive Committee oversees all financial transactions by authorising all payments for both artists' payments and for the centre's operations. Following an industry best-practice model, Warakurna Artists has two linked bank accounts. The first is the Artists' Account – a trust that holds the artists' income from art sales. Artists use this account as a private savings account, allowing them to manage their funds independently. The second is the Administration Account, which holds all the business funds and is the account that 'runs' the business side of the organisation.

How to...

Create a strong governance structure

MG CORPORATION

In October 2005, a native title Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) was negotiated between the Miriung Gajerrong people of north-eastern WA, the WA State Government and other parties. Called the Ord Final Agreement (OFA), the ILUA dealt with the rights and responsibilities of the traditional owners, the government and developers or businesses involved in the expansion of the Ord river irrigation area. A provision of this agreement was to create the Yawoorroong Miriung Gajerrong Yirrgab Noong Dawang Corporation (MG Corporation) which would ensure the implementation of the OFA and develop the opportunities stemming from it on behalf of the MG peoples. As well as this, MG saw itself as a hub for the recognition and promotion of culture and a vehicle for the close involvement of Kariel (elders) in decision-making. In order to ensure that such aims were achievable (which is no easy task!) the corporate structure developed a number of different corporate entities - or unincorporated committees - to carry out specific functions under the overall leadership of the MG Corporation. The MG Corporation, referred to as the 'mothership' by its members, is tasked with setting the overall strategic direction and policy for the MG Corporate structure.

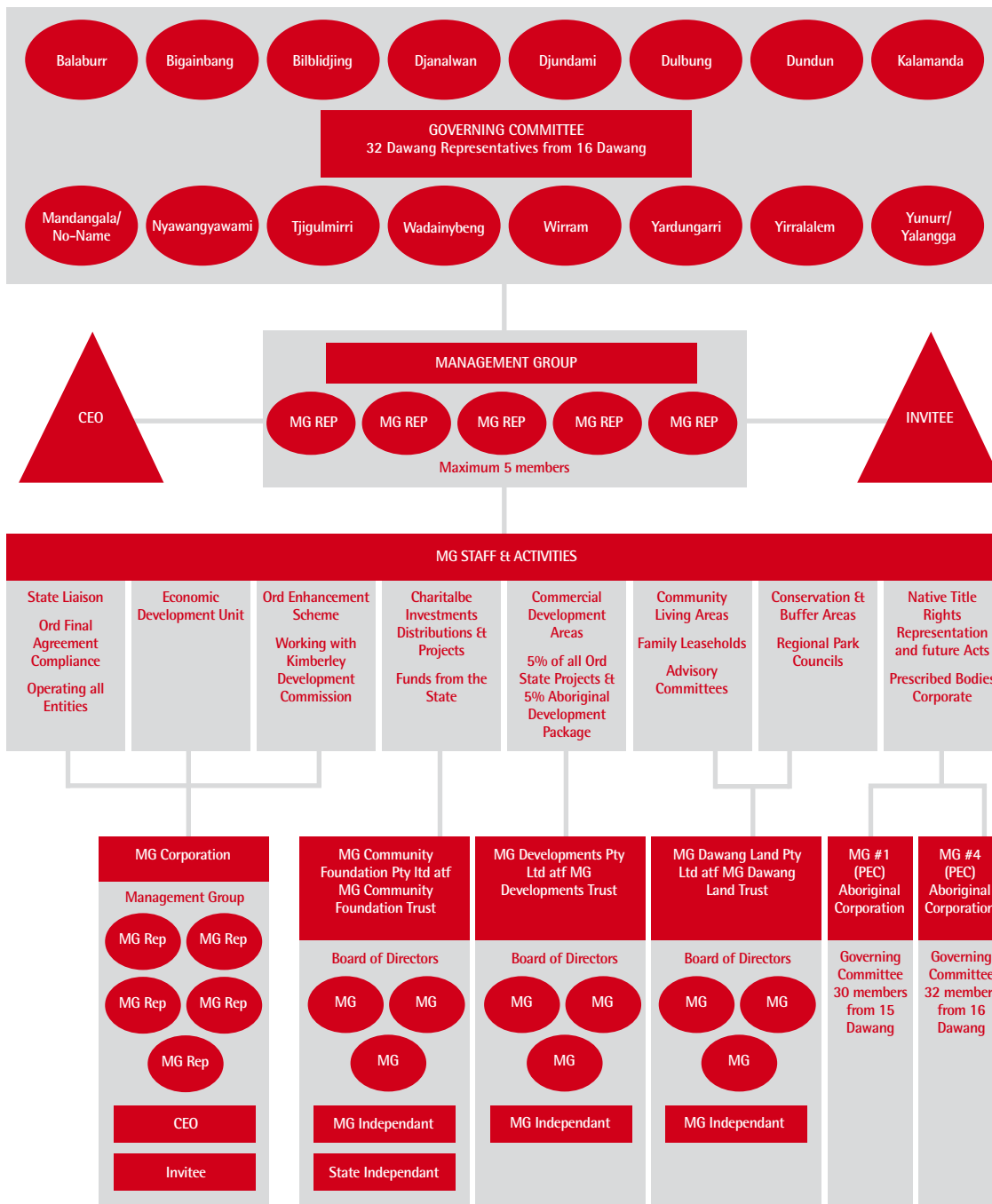
As is evident in the MG Corporation management flow chart (see page 36), the web which has been created to negotiate the needs of this organisation is intricate but forms a strong foundation for their complex operations.

All administration and staffing of the MG Corporate structure comes under the control of the MG Corporation. A CEO runs the administrative arm. There is a Management Group who work with the CEO to ensure the effective administration of the MG Corporation and to report to the Governing Committee. There are also three MG subsidiary Pty Ltd Trustee companies with specific purposes in relation to the implementation of the OFA:

1. Community Foundation Charitable Trust. This Trust was established in compliance with a requirement under the OFA. It comprises a Board of three MG directors and two independent directors. The function of this Trust is to hold, manage and grow the investment funds that flow to MG under the OFA.
2. The Dawang Land Trust. This Trust is not a requirement of the OFA. It was established to hold the community and conservation lands to be transferred under the OFA as freehold title on trust for Dawawang (traditional owners). The Board consists of three MG directors and an independent director.
3. The Development Trust. This Trust was not a requirement of the OFA but was established to enable the transfer of commercial lands and to focus on the development of business opportunities and sustainable economic development for the MG community. This also has a Board of three MG directors and an MG independent director.

MG CORPORATION

Yawoorrong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgb Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation



MG Corporation also assists two additional MG native title Prescribed Body Corporates (MG PBC#1 and MG PBC#4) to protect and manage the MG native title rights and interests until such time as there are additional resources to carry out their legal functions as PBCs. The PBCs are both incorporated under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act.

In its current structure, the general membership of the MG Corporation and the PBCs is made up of all members of MG Dawang who comprise the whole MG traditional country. MG people become members of the Corporation by application and must nominate the Dawang group to which they belong.

- The MG Corporation Governing Committee is composed of 32 representatives – being two from each of the 16 Dawang areas.
- The PBC # 1 is made up of 30 members from 15 Dawang relating to the MG 1 native title claim.
- The PBC # 4 is made up of 32 members from 16 Dawang relating to the MG # 4 native title claim. These Dawang representatives are nominated at specific Dawang meetings, and are chosen to represent their Dawang on the Governing Committee.

The representation is culturally based, and where possible, must include one senior member from the Dawang group.

All of these aspects of the corporate structure seek to reflect the interest of those involved in the organisation and ensure the opportunities and benefits of the company are able to be completely realised.



Image: MG Corporation

The representation is culturally based, and where possible, must include one senior member from the Dawang group



2 Making and implementing decisions



The separation of the strategic role of the governing body and the day-to-day management of the organisation is an essential principle of good governance. An organisation's management is accountable and answerable to the governing body, and the governing body is accountable and answerable to its members and to the whole organisation. The role of the governing body is to make policy and the role of management is to implement those policies. Power is shared between the governing body and the management. They each have particular roles and responsibilities and a special set of powers to enable them to carry out their jobs effectively.

Organisations have two different streams of accountability. One is internal and involves clear communication and understanding of tasks from the governing body, through the management to the staff and back again. The other accountability is external and includes keeping members, partners and funders informed of the work the organisation is doing. This helps to ensure the organisation is meeting its funding requirements as well as providing the services and delivering the outcomes that the community expects it to.

Tracking and monitoring progress is necessary to ensure the organisation is working towards achieving its goals and vision, as well as meeting all its internal and external accountabilities.

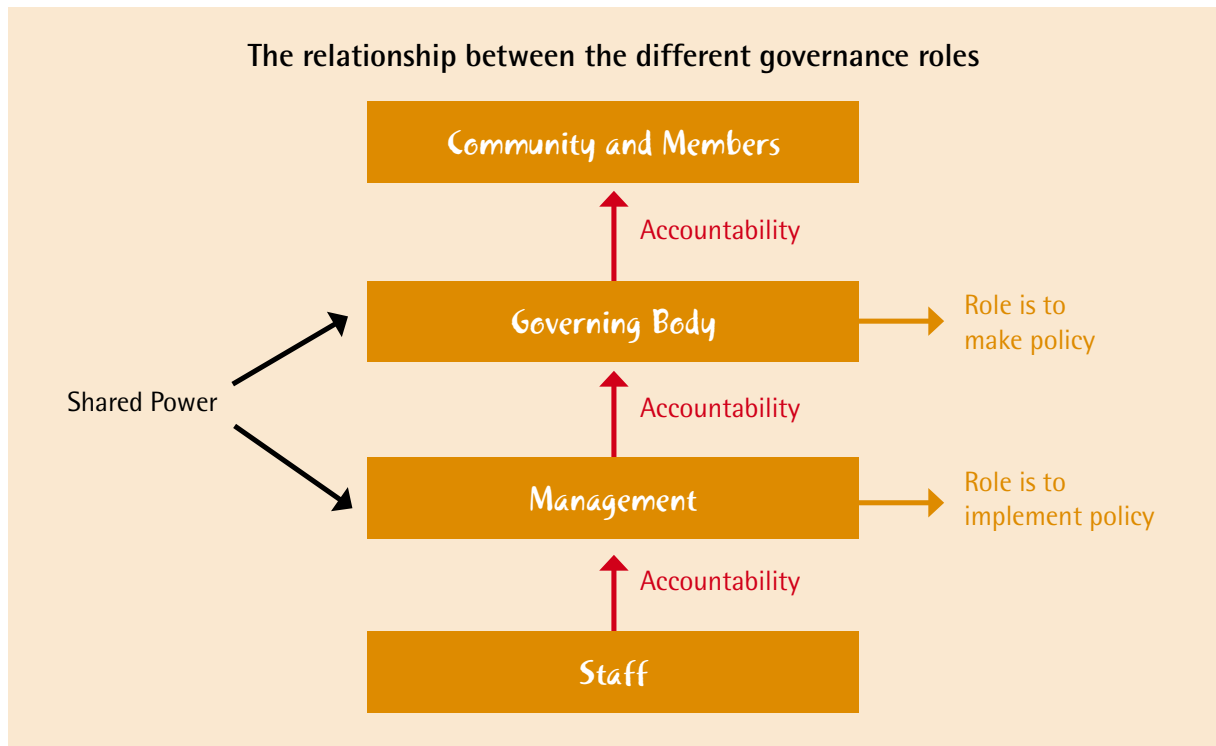



Image: South West Aboriginal Medical Services



Successful organisations should be able to separate themselves from local politics. Staff and governing body members are often involved with a range of organisations in varying capacities, but there must be a clear distinction between those different roles. The management and operations of the organisation shouldn't be influenced by outside sources. This is particularly critical where business development is concerned.

Decision-making processes

Successful organisations recognise that different levels of the organisation – the governing Board, management and employees – have different issues to deal with and that decision-making at each level has to have a transparent and mutually understood process involving the appropriate parties. First and foremost, organisations who applied for the 2008 Awards recognised that their most important concern was to achieve consensus where possible in making decisions at all levels. Most saw the CEO or general manager as critical to ensuring these processes were robust. The CEO or manager was also seen to have primary responsibility for communicating staff feedback/concerns to the governing body and, most importantly, ensuring staff are aware of governing body decisions.

It is important to know what to do when consensus can't be reached and each of the 2008 organisations had their own innovative processes to respond to these situations. Many of the 2008 IGA organisations stressed the importance of encouraging transparency and openness and allowing for time and lengthy discussions when hard or important decisions were being made. Some proposed the establishment of committees such as Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) or Quality Management to provide specialist advice to managers and the governing body to assist in good decision-making on more specialised areas. Others looked to elders, important community members, experts or representatives of government to brief the governing body or executives on important considerations. Many recommended that the more information there was supporting decision-making, the easier it would be to make a good decision. Strategic direction guidelines, decision-making protocols, explanatory tools and training opportunities were all suggested as important tools for aiding decision-making.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Day to day management issues are decided by **Brisbane Indigenous Media Association** (BIMA) management, and the Board sets policy and overall direction of the organisation. Community consultation, especially in terms of the maintenance of traditional culture and promotion of traditional community values, is included in the decision-making process. A community reference group consisting of elders and community members has been established to review and evaluate programs and projects delivered by BIMA.

The **Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation** Board has the final authority over all major decisions and also chooses the direction of the organisation with advice and input from the staff. If required, a special meeting may be called or a decision may be called for via email with all responses recorded in the minutes file. A quorum of responses is required to ratify a decision.

Governing committee meeting papers are prepared for each **South West Aboriginal Medical Service** (SWAMS) governing committee meeting. The contents of the papers will include recommendations put in the form of resolutions for the governing committee's approval. The governing committee will discuss each recommendation and take a vote. Decisions are made by the governing committee as a body corporate and individual governing committee members cannot make decisions or bind SWAMS unless otherwise approved by the governing committee.

Tangentyere Council decisions are made through a democratic voting system. Guest speakers or representatives of government are often invited to brief the Executive on significant matters. The Executive Director, Senior Executive Officer and senior managers have clearly defined powers to make decisions over day to day management matters of the Council.

Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi aims for consensus decisions but can use voting if consensus is not reached. Unresolved issues can be carried forward to the next Executive or Management Committee meeting, with additional information provided to assist those making the decision. Waltja meetings involve discussions in a swathe of desert languages; Warlpiri, Luritja, Western Arrernte, Eastern Arrernte, Pintupi, Kaytej, Anmatyerre, Alyawarre, Pitjantjatjara and English.

Successful organisations should be able to separate themselves from local politics



Image: South West Aboriginal Medical Service

The diversity of the **Yirra Yaakin Aboriginal Corporation** Board is seen as an asset to good decision-making, with members representing varied expertise, from community leaders to senior public service officers, to musicians, writers and artists. Yirra Yaakin also has two sub-committees with two non-Indigenous members who are appointed by the Board and report to the Board. These non-Indigenous members were appointed to compliment the skills and expertise of the existing Indigenous Board and to act as voluntary consultants and advisors.

When cultural questions arise at **Dharriwaa Elders Group Incorporated**, the decision of elders of the relevant country is sought then upheld. All members of the Elders Council must declare to other members of the Elders Council at each meeting any interest they have in another organisation or matter which may conflict with the best interests of the group. Any member of the Elders Council with an outside interest which relates to a matter before the Council cannot vote on the matter.

Implementing decisions

To ensure decisions were implemented many 2008 IGA organisations had a twofold process. First, those tasked with implementing the decision had to be completely briefed on what they were expected to do. Second, management had to keep a record of any decisions that were made, convey the necessary information and keep account of the actions taken. Many different tools were utilised for providing information and then feedback – organisations relied heavily on meetings with detailed and recorded minutes, tracking reports (such as resolution and action sheets) and various modes of communication including emails, letters and faxes. Where decisions were not carried out, these were often referred back to the Board to take action. Ensuring the implementation of decisions is a key component of governance in which all levels of an organisation have a necessary and important role.

IDEAS THAT WORK

The **Central Queensland Indigenous Development Ltd** CEO meets with all managers and discusses the decisions made by the Board. A working party is then formed to manage the project. All changes and decisions are sent to all staff via email and managers of each section are responsible for informing staff. A monthly meeting is held for everyone and feedback of any change is asked for.

The endorsed minutes of **Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara** Executive Board meetings are posted on the internet providing transparency in decision-making. Depending upon the decisions made, relevant staff members are informed and directed to implement those decisions. The Director of Administration oversees the implementation of resolutions of Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara and the Executive Board.

Each **South West Aboriginal Medical Service** governing committee meeting produces a resolution sheet and an action sheet to ensure that action is taken. The resolution and action sheets are presented at the next governing committee meeting to advise the governing committee of the outcomes. Each member of the executive the CEO, health services manager and corporate services manager produce a written report for each governing committee meeting and cover any unresolved issues in their reports.

The senior management of the **Traditional Credit Union** (TCU) maintain an effective communication system to receive and disseminate up-to-date information to relevant personnel. It does this by weekly staff meetings, email, mail outs, annual Board reports, team building exercises, training forums and an in house intranet.

Informing stakeholders

Good relationships with stakeholders and processes that ensure they are kept up to date are vital. All organisations have stakeholders who must be included in and informed of decisions made by the organisation. This includes both internal staff and members of an organisation as well as, if appropriate, funding bodies, local and regional communities and any other involved parties. Good relationships with primary stakeholders occur when an organisation not only understands and takes into account stakeholder expectations, but also fulfils them.

Processes for informing stakeholders of organisations' decisions and actions include newsletters, notice boards, in-house intranets, organisation websites and email bulletins. AGMs, public meetings and workshops are also ways in which organisations can keep their stakeholders informed.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Gannambarra Limited holds discussion sessions with representatives of their funding bodies, where matters regarding program delivery are analysed and recommendations are made. The members on the Board, being representatives of other Aboriginal organisations, report to their respective organisations on the performance of Gannambarra in respect to goals and objectives of the organisation.

When decisions at **Mingaletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation** are made and acted on in between community meeting, members and other supporting organisations may be informed in writing, by email, interagency networks and local newspaper advertisements. Decisions and activities are also regularly displayed on the Mingaletta community notice board.

The minutes of each **Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre** meeting contain an action schedule which nominates the responsible officer for action/follow up and due date. Quarterly financial and narrative reports against agreed indicators and milestones are made to funding bodies. The Executive officers report to the Management Board bi-monthly and the Management Committee quarterly outlining all actions taken. A regional newsletter is available to members and community.

Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA) communicates with the wider community through regular on-air announcements and the publishing of a regular e-newsletter. Regular contact with the community and elders is also built into the work of staff at all levels, through attendance at community meetings and events, prison visits and meetings with elders. BIMA's community reference group meets monthly and has input into, and is aware of the impacts of, all decisions made by the Board.

Kura Yerlo Incorporated continually attracts new partners who work with them collaboratively including local government, non-government partners, and community members. All of them are provided with Kura Yerlo Annual Reports, pamphlets on program areas and the audited financial report.

Traditional Credit Union (TCU) interacts proactively with their stakeholders to foster awareness and collaboration. They communicate with stakeholders (employees, members/ shareholders, investors, government regulatory agencies, suppliers) through promotional activities, such as events they sponsor and support eg: the Indigenous Employment and Economic Development Forum. They communicate with remote community stakeholders through traditional owners/community leaders and councils. Several of these remote communities' leaders are also represented on the TCU Board of Directors. They travel vast distances to communicate with our primary stakeholders (the membership) in remote communities.

The **Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC)** has developed a newsletter which communicates major Board decisions and other important developments to their stakeholders. The ARC employed a Koori Mail journalist to work with the ARC Board and ARC staff to get 'murri friendly' land management and cultural heritage news collated from the region out to a wide audience. 500 copies of the newsletter are printed and distributed. Their website is also an important vehicle for keeping interested parties up to date on direction, current projects and outcomes that the ARC has been successful in delivering. When a decision/initiative affects a particular group, the ARC will communicate with community leaders individually where appropriate, or organise a community meeting if required.

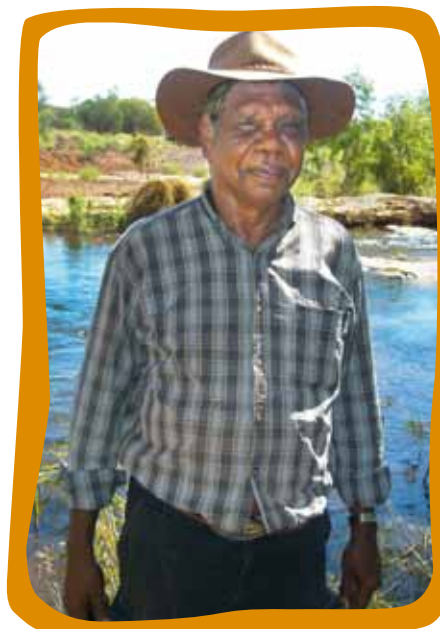


Image: Yamatji Corporation

How to... Keep stakeholders informed

- Hold discussion sessions with representatives of the funding bodies, where matters regarding the delivery of the program are analysed and recommendations are made.
- Send stakeholders information in writing, by email, interagency networks and local newspaper advertisements.
- Display decisions and activities on a community notice board.
- Write a regional newsletter for members and community or send 'update' faxes to remote community members and service workers without internet.
- Make meeting minutes publicly available.
- Advertising public meetings on local radio/through newspaper/internet.
- Having a regular e-newsletter.
- Providing partners and stakeholders with Annual Reports, pamphlets on program areas and audited financial reports.
- Organising promotion activities such as sponsored events like forums, cultural heritage projects, festivals, performance and workshops.
- Visiting communities with large stakeholder (especially elder) populations, consulting, working on programs with the community and seeking feedback.
- Creating and maintaining a website.



Display decisions and activities on a community notice board

3 Conflict resolution



Conflicts arise in nearly every organisation at some point; the measure of the organisation is not the conflict itself, but its processes for effective conflict resolution. Good communication and well understood conflict resolution policies are the main ingredients in ensuring disputes are dealt with well.

Overwhelmingly, IGA organisations name communication as the critical factor in resolving conflict. Ensuring there are solid lines of communication between the governing body, management, staff and stakeholders is critical. Also important are techniques to manage disputes. Many organisations invest in dispute resolution training and ensure leaders are equipped with the knowledge and experience to deal effectively and fairly with issues they are confronted with.

All of the 2008 nominees indicated that they had some form of conflict resolution in place. These processes almost universally began with approaching the person/people directly involved. Many have a tiered approach to complaints and dispute resolution, with primary complaints overseen by a designated internal person and, if a resolution can not be achieved, generally the Board or CEO is the ultimate arbiter. Various organisations suggested referring more complicated disputes outside the organisation to traditional elders, a commissioner for community services or an agreed mediator.



Internal conflicts

Many of the 2008 nominees have a policy and procedure manual or some sort of conflict resolution process to prevent or pre-empt internal disputes or complaints. These have clear definitions about who should be involved in different complaints and the roles and responsibilities of those who are implicated. These procedures had generally been developed by the governing body, occasionally with input from a professional consultant. Most of the applicants stressed that any conflict was strictly confidential, dealt with in a timely manner and had positive outcomes as the aim. Cultural input was also considered important for many organisations, which based their process on traditional resolution techniques.

IGA organisations name communication as the critical factor in resolving conflict

Image: Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi

Conflict between staff was generally best resolved through the two parties coming together for discussions and, if this was not successful or appropriate, a manager or the CEO would intervene to make a final decision. Some organisations expected the governing Board to participate in internal disputes or alternatively asked elders from the community for advice. Many organisations recognised that with a clear procedure in place, dispute training for employees and management and an open and honest work environment, conflicts could be both pre-empted and resolved.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Staff disputes and complaints at **MG Corporation** must go in the first instance to the CEO for resolution. Other disputes between the Governing Body or between Governing Body and members are provided for in the MG constitutions and are settled in accordance with traditional laws and customs. There is a provision that requires the Governing Committee to convene a special meeting and participate in good faith to resolve a dispute that has proven unresolvable at lower levels. An independent person, experienced with Indigenous laws and customs or other relevant expertise, may be appointed if necessary.

Disputes within the **Brisbane Indigenous Media Association** (BIMA) Board are dealt with through internal negotiation, with a focus on ensuring that decisions are backed up by the appropriate community consultation and research, and align with the stated objectives of the organisation. A democratic process of discussion generally suffices for most minor disputes.

If a dispute at **Jarlmadanagah Burru Aboriginal Corporation** is not resolved by the governing body then the elders of the community will intervene. Should these processes not satisfy then arbitration by a third party (agreeable to both parties) may be requested.



Image: Brambruk

The resolution of complaints or disputes at **Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly** is guided by the Murdi Paaki code of conduct. This document acknowledges the responsibility of participating individuals to maintain public trust, work diligently and with integrity, and to use the influence gained as office holders to advance the common good of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the Murdi Paaki region.

External complaints

External complaints tend to be resolved most frequently by the governing body or CEO and formal processes are set up for dealing with them. Many organisations had outside complaints documented on a complaint file and investigated thoroughly. Others encouraged grievances to be put in writing so that they could be formally dealt with by the Board in a Board meeting and a formal reply could be issued. Interestingly, various organisations recognised external criticisms from members, clients and stakeholders as important feedback and a means for improving their services. There were varying procedures for external grievances. A common theme was that organisations were aware of the importance of their external stakeholders and responding to their complaints with care.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Complaints to **Gannambarra Limited** that cannot be resolved informally between management and the person concerned are referred to the Board of Directors. These complaints are documented on the Gannambarra complaints file and investigated thoroughly.

In common with internal dispute resolution processes, **Warakurna Artists** equips the Executive Committee with the knowledge and experience to deal with external complaints as confidently as with any other governance issue.

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) Community Working Parties (CWPs) meetings are open to any individual or organisation. This means that external complaints can be heard by the CWP at its monthly meeting where the community is able to address the complaint directly. The Regional Assembly conducts 'open' meetings, and also invites individuals/organisations to attend an MPRA meeting to discuss the complaint directly with the MPRA. If the matter is not able to be addressed through discussion at the relevant meeting, the MPRA Chairperson works directly with the complainant to address their issues.

Tangentyere Council's clients, their advocates or primary care agencies who are not satisfied with the service they are receiving are asked to address their concern to the head of the appropriate department. They will assess the concern and seek a negotiated solution within 14 working days. If this fails to satisfy the complainant, the matter is referred to the Divisional Manager or the Executive Director. Where the clients, their advocates or primary care agencies remain dissatisfied they are directed to the appropriate governmental body eg. the Anti-Discrimination Commission.

The methodology set out in the Australian Standard on Complaints Handling has been used as a benchmark in preparing **Traditional Credit Union's** (TCU) complaints process and assists in monitoring and implementing dispute resolution procedures and processes. Broadly, TCU's process for resolving disputes and complaints is based upon the following key themes: early resolution; accurate communication; simplicity; easy access; efficiency equity and organisational commitment.

Above all TCU's policy is based on the premises that:

- (a) a client has the right to complain and have a complaint handled;
- (b) complaints provide feedback about product or service experience; and
- (c) a complaint received gives the organisation the opportunity to maintain confidence in its services.

Indigenous Harvest Australia Cooperative Ltd manages external complaints from clients, stakeholders or the public through acknowledgment of the complaint and direct communication, whether informal or written. Where appropriate, an apology is provided and corrective action agreed. The importance of upholding the reputation, stakeholder relationships and the strong public image of the Co-operative is a high priority for the business.

Many organisations had outside complaints documented on a complaint file and investigated thoroughly

How to... initiate board members and management

Yamatji Marlpa Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji is the Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) for the Pilbara, Murchison and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. NTRB functions and powers involve support to native title claimants and holders to make various applications under the Native Title Act (including claimant and compensation applications) and to respond to proposed future acts (any activity/development on land or waters that may affect native title rights). The organisation also has a range of other objectives and purposes which aim to protect, promote, encourage, maintain and renew traditional culture.

Yamatji is governed through a Board and two regional executive committees with the responsibility for accountability and compliance resting with the Board. Yamatji's overall policy direction is provided by its Board and given the scope of their decision-making authority, a well initiated and informed Board is imperative.

Yamatji recognises the strategic importance of providing quality training and development opportunities to the Board and management in order to achieve key priorities and meet statutory and corporate needs.

Yamatji provides new Board members with induction training. The induction includes an overview of:

- the history, structure, functions and operational policies and procedures of the organisation;
- organisational funding arrangements and elements of the budget;
- roles and responsibilities of staff, roles and responsibilities of Board members, remuneration of Board members;
- an address by the Federal Government Project Officer with responsibility for day to day liaison with the organisation; and
- confidentiality agreements relating to matters that come before the Board.

Yamatji provides new Board members with induction training





Board members are also provided with a Board Member Induction Kit comprising:

- a copy of the Yamatji constitution;
- a copy of the Yamatji strategic and operational plans;
- a copy of the Yamatji policies and procedures manual;
- a copy of the governmental conditions of grant and approved budget; and
- details of any other organisation compliance requirements.

Training and development of Board members is assessed and managed by the Board in conjunction with the CEO as a shared responsibility.

Yamatji is an Aboriginal corporation so employees are obligated to have an understanding of the Aboriginal culture of the region Yamatji serves. Yamatji has developed a Cross Cultural Awareness Training (CCAT) policy to enable non-Indigenous staff to increase their understanding of Aboriginal culture and issues. Regional Managers coordinate CCAT in their regions in consultation with the Governing and Regional Committees. Yamatji offers compulsory CCAT to all staff on an annual basis.

Training and development of Board members is assessed and managed by the Board in conjunction with the CEO as a shared responsibility

4 Leadership development



Good leadership comes from a range of qualities including, but not limited to, experience, knowledge, integrity, fairness, and good communication skills. Above all, leaders must be trustworthy and inspire the confidence of staff, Board and stakeholders. Critical too is leaders' ability to identify their weaknesses and seek assistance where necessary.

Leaders are the foundation stones for community and organisational governance. They need to know what their role is, its limits, and they must be committed to carrying out the responsibilities given to them. Leadership is not just for people at the top. All members of an organisation can show leadership in particular areas. Building team leadership is an important part of fostering an organisation. As IGA Chair Mick Dodson has said *'we have to have leadership right through our organisations'*. It's important to distinguish between leadership and management. An organisation needs to have both, but not all leaders are good managers, and equally, not all managers are good leaders.

Indigenous leadership is complex as it is not only based on kinship, family and knowledge-based systems and laws, but also on governance rules and expectations of western-style incorporated bodies. There are also extra challenges for Indigenous organisations and communities because there is a small pool of leaders, they have a huge workload, and have to wear many different hats. This means leaders usually have multiple responsibilities and obligations.



Indigenous leaders have a 'two-way' accountability. On the one hand they need to regularly explain and justify their decisions to family and community. On the other hand they will also have to explain and justify their decisions to organisational authorities and funding providers, in the context of the rules and laws of those stakeholders. Furthermore, Indigenous leaders need to ensure they have a two-way legitimacy – from their own members and community, and from external stakeholders – if they are to continue to work effectively on behalf of their organisations.

Developing staff

An organisation's employees are its greatest resource. They play, an equal, if not more important, role than the governing body in an organisations success. While the governing body operate as the 'brains' of the organisation, it is useless without the 'body' (the staff) fulfilling the organisation's objectives. Investment in and support for staff capacity and development are key features of successive IGA winners and finalists.

Leaders are the foundation stones for community and organisational governance

Image: Traditional Credit Union

Providing staff with opportunities for improving and strengthening their skills, abilities and knowledge, is an investment in achieving the organisation's goals. Building an internal culture that values people and their individual and collective contributions also encourages a greater shared commitment to the vision and outcomes of the organisation.

Good policies, systems and rules that everyone can work within are a sound basis for sustainable staff development. It's also important to build team respect and relationships through all levels of the organisation. Creating and reviewing individual professional development plans and actively engaging in formal and informal training enables staff to reach their full potential and to actively participate as valued members of the organisation.

Many of the organisations that entered the IGA have a deliberate, planned approach to staff training. For example, staff training is built into human resource development plans and/or staff appraisal processes, and staff have opportunities attend training courses, workshops and conferences for their development. In a number of the organisations staff are undertaking formal study, and some specifically mentioned mentoring or on-the-job training.

IDEAS THAT WORK

In 2007, **Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation** was mentored by Barbara Cail AM, an experienced publisher, and all staff have benefited from her expertise. Magabala's trainee marketing manager continues to be mentored by experienced professionals, including a journalist from Melbourne accessed by Magabala through the Indigenous Community Volunteer Program. Magabala's publishing trainee completed a Certificate II in Business Administration at TAFE in 2007 and has participated in a number of courses on publishing. The sales and administration manager recently participated in the Landmark personal development course in Melbourne.

Central Queensland Indigenous Development Ltd staff have the opportunity of development and training. The budget reflects a significant contribution to staff training – supporting all managers to complete their Certificate 4 in training, as well as additional staff working towards masters and bachelor degrees.

At the end of each school term, **Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre** staff undertake formal and in-house training in accordance with identified needs and operational requirements. The budget sets aside a generous annual sum for staff amenities, training and development.



Image: Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA) is a Registered Training Organisation with a strong commitment to staff training and development. All staff can access BIMA's professional centre in Brisbane, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. The trainers, who are supported by guest presenters from the Indigenous community and other media organisations, deliver culturally appropriate training in Certificates II, III and IV of the Australian Film, TV, Radio and Multimedia package.

On commencement, **Traditional Credit Union (TCU)** employees attend a week long residential induction program based in the Darwin head office. The induction program is designed to welcome new employees and introduce them to the head office support team as well as provide them with all the necessary information to start their careers with TCU.

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi offers Certificate I and II in Business to administrative staff and trainees, and also pays for other external accredited training. Members of staff are supported to attend conferences and workshops in Alice Springs, Darwin and interstate, usually accompanied by Management Committee members. All Waltja staff are on 12-month contracts, commencing at the start of the financial year. Performance appraisal by the Manager and Executive is part of the process of developing new contracts with staff members. The Waltja Executive writes letters of appreciation to staff members when they are particularly impressed with their work.

Aboriginal Urban Services' budget allows for staff and management training in administration process and procedures, bookkeeping and MYOB, computer skills development and IT, budgeting and financial management, public speaking and group work training, community services development and counselling in relationships, family violence, drugs and alcohol abuse.

Developing the governing body

A key factor in an organisations' success is having governing body with a clear understanding of, and commitment to, their roles and responsibilities. Because members of a governing body often have different levels of skills and experience, regular governance training is important. Governance training can take various forms; it can be formal training sessions led by a consultant, informal training run in-house, external courses run by training institutions or through tools developed specifically for a particular Board. Some governing bodies meet the day before AGMs or Board meetings to discuss and gain a better understanding of the issues. Others have developed their own visual language to explain, for example, the flow of money through the organisation.

Some of the organisations indicated that their governing body received training either as a group or as individuals, while others were supported by consultants or mentors who assisted them with planning, reviews and other strategic processes.

Governing bodies must also attend to succession planning. Succession planning is the process of deciding how to hand on authority to new Board members without losing too much Board knowledge and capacity. Governing bodies that do not plan for old members leaving and new ones coming on can lose too much organisational knowledge. Mentoring new Board members and ensuring older members give sufficient notice when planning to leave allows for smooth transitions.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Yirra Yaakin Aboriginal Corporation Board members have a succession plan in accordance with the three-year, two-year and one-year cycles. No Board member can sit for more than two three-year terms which ensures a healthy turn over and succession of Board whilst retaining valuable corporate memory. The Board also has professional development opportunities, and support has been identified for international opportunities to boost professional development. Yirra Yarkin activates advisory groups as required who are referred to as "business angels", experts in their field who volunteer their time to support the Board to make informed decisions.

Developing future leaders

Developing future leaders and succession planning ensures there are always experienced and well trained people to guide the organisation and keep it stable. This means organisations that work well today will be able to continue their good work in the future.

The idea of succession planning has been around for a long time in Indigenous communities. Traditional Indigenous societies have always had rules and processes for educating their next generation of leaders with the knowledge, skills and qualities needed to progressively take on leadership roles.

Governing bodies that do not plan for old members leaving and new ones coming on can lose too much organisational knowledge

Today Indigenous leaders need a diverse set of skills and knowledge to lead their communities and organisations. To ensure good governance and the long-term survival of their organisation, current leaders need to mentor and develop the leaders of tomorrow.

If future leaders are to govern their organisations well they need to have regular place-based governance training about roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities. They also need opportunities to develop skills and experience, and access to appropriate advice and ongoing support. Mentoring, training and work experience are all important aspects of developing future leaders.

The most commonly mentioned strategy for developing future leaders is mentoring. Many organisations have a planned process of training and development for their staff and governing body, and others provide development opportunities such as conference attendance. Some have youth-focused activities designed to develop young people's leadership, and others provide scholarships or traineeships to develop younger or new people.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Murriajabree Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Association has a very strong volunteer member base and the elders and Board members mentor any person who is prepared to commit to the Association in the long term and may step into the shoes of outgoing Board members.

Participants at the **Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre** are encouraged to achieve their full potential and engage in activities that teach leadership skills. The organisation has recently developed a mentoring model for outgoing participants based on best practice called 'Dream On'.

South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) holds a number of workshops for young people who are also encouraged to attend leadership courses. SWAMS promotes any study towards tertiary courses that relates to roles in the organisation. The SWAMS Board approaches future leadership within their community by creating six scholarships for young people in the region who are in years 11-12 and interested in a future in health.

Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation has developed strong relationships with local schools, where they conduct regular workshops designed to foster cultural pride and promote opportunities. Ungooroo also implements a range of mentoring programs including engaging elders to act as mentors to potential future leaders.

Yirra Yaakin Aboriginal Corporation sees a role for itself in identifying and fostering leadership not only within their organisation, but the arts sector as a whole. They are presently working with Austrade to look at formalising an incubator role for acts that are poised to take up international opportunities. At a local level, Yirra Yaakin runs workshop residencies in schools and communities run by Aboriginal actors and theatre workers. At least four recent workshop attendees are now actually working for Yirra Yaakin on a casual basis performing in festivals and community events.



Image: Yirra Yaakin

How to...

Create and facilitate staff development and training programs

Warakurna Artists

Building on a growing momentum in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands for commercially focussed organisations that reflect the values, continuity and rich distinctiveness of Ngaanyatjarra culture, Warakurna Artists was established to meet the aspirations of Warakurna residents for a locally owned and managed arts enterprise.

In remote communities such as Warakurna, residents have extremely limited opportunities to access independent income, set up small business activities or engage equitably with mainstream markets. In this environment art centres, such as Warakurna Artists, offer a coherent, culturally appropriate and highly successful combination of social, cultural and economic activities.

One of the critical building blocks of Warakurna Artists' success has been the emphasis on governance training and highly participatory governance processes. This has come through the Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training, a unique initiative in remote Australia. The program works with some of central/western Australia's most successful Aboriginal enterprises, building on the governance processes, using a very strong regional framework. Each member art centre's mandate is to provide culturally appropriate, locally owned and managed enterprise and employment opportunities for Ngaanyatjarra (and increasingly Pitjantjatjara) people from communities around the tri-state border area of WA, NT and SA.

To provide skills, confidence and professional development opportunities to the artists and Executive Committee, Warakurna Artists has attended all sessions offered by Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training. In order to grant Warakurna Artist's Executive Committee high quality, culturally appropriate, fully translated governance training and information (and to create regional relationships and role models) Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training is working with arts enterprise across the tri-state area. The aim is to build strong and confident Executive Committees, ensuring better management of their enterprises and continually boosting the participation of all members in the processes of managing their organisation.

Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training processes are based around a regular pattern of workshops. Three to four times a year, all regional art centre Executive Committees meet at a nominated community. Over 3 or 4 days, a broad range of governance topics are covered, depending on the interests and experience of the attendees. All meetings are fully translated, with more experienced members often taking a leading role when a new member or new Executive Committee attends. There is generally a focus on financial processes and accountability (given the commercial focus of the art centres) though broader topics such as planning and staffing are also covered. These workshops can also double as formal performance review and/or probation assessments for staff.

The governance training priorities align to Warakurna Artists' own priorities of building the engagement between Executive Committees, members, staff and the wider commercial arts industry. In remote communities, staff attraction, retention and performance is a critical issue, perhaps the most central issue to organisation effectiveness. All participating art centres are improving their HR systems through more –

- relevant staff contracts,
- robust recruitment,
- specific staff development opportunities,
- accountability in performance and reporting by staff and specific staff probation and performance review processes, with external representatives.

The Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training ensures Executive Committees have knowledge and familiarity with all these practices by making sure they have theoretical and practical experience. Warakurna Artists' Executive Committee, like the other participating art centres' Executives, face the reality of managing complex, hybrid organisations that operate across the cultural – commercial domain. The governance training focuses on strengthening their capacity, improving their organisational literacy and on building community role models and leaders.

The longevity of the Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training program has ensured an impressive level of continuity. This has meant that new Executive Committees (they are each voted in annually) can engage with the training and are often mentored by Executive Committee members who have been participating for longer periods. Creating local and regional role models and leaders has

been a major benefit from the program as these people have taken on broader community leadership roles in areas such as the school, store or in regional organisations. Warakurna Artists has also engaged industry and business specialists which the Executive Committee and Manager draw upon when required.

There are many aspects of the Warakurna Artists experience and the Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training program which other Indigenous organisations can draw on for strengthening their staff development and training programs.

The longevity of the Ngaanyatjarra Arts Governance Training program has ensured an impressive level of continuity





How to... Encourage future leaders

Brisbane Indigenous Media Association

Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA) was established to provide a voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the media, and to contribute to the maintenance of culture and economic growth of the Indigenous people of south-east Queensland. It offers an essential service to Indigenous communities locally and nationally, giving them regular updates on Indigenous issues, promoting traditional and contemporary culture and providing a forum for the promotion and discussion of important issues such as health, nutrition, substance abuse, suicide and crime. BIMA also has a commitment to the development of young people as future community leaders, and to developing strong networks between elders, young people and community organisations. Since 1999 BIMA has been a Registered Training Organisation delivering accredited media training to Indigenous people.

Future leaders development is a major focus of BIMA. The scope of their training goes beyond technical training and involves empowering young people, many of whom are unemployed or at risk, through an emphasis on communications skills, confidence and experience working in a professional team environment. The training is delivered both face-to-face and on-line, to ensure Indigenous people in regional and remote areas can access and benefit from it. The Cape York Indigenous Media Pathways training project won the Best Indigenous Training Initiative in the 2006 Qld Training Awards.

One of BIMA's projects focussing on up-skilling and encouraging young people to be future leaders is Young, Strong and Proud. This program, aimed at young people in 18 remote Aboriginal communities in Queensland, works to develop a series of communications tools focusing on substance misuse. Working with professional radio and communications trainers, the young people in each community develop a package of locally-created communications tools for their own community. These communications tools are designed to be used locally, and feature local artwork and photography.

The Young, Strong and Safe project has been developed in partnership with the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Independent School. Young people at the school and in detention are actively involved in producing music, radio segments and printed and online material focusing on prevention of youth crime.

The scope of the training goes beyond technical training and involves empowering young people

5 Cultural norms and values



Traditional Indigenous governance involved a system of ancient laws and traditions that communities, clans, families and groups used to organise themselves so they could achieve the things that were important to them. Today Indigenous people bring many aspects of these cultural ways of doing things in to their organisations, working them into their rules, structures and constitutions. Incorporating these values and traditions gives Indigenous governance its own unique qualities.


Including culture in modern business or community organisations isn't always easy. It means paying attention to traditional ways of decision making, acknowledging the need for cultural legitimacy and recognising the role of community in governance. While Indigenous governance arrangements need to be informed by cultural standards, if they are to be regarded as legitimate by community members, the non-Indigenous governance rules and accountabilities of the organisation also have to work - it has to be capable of getting things done in the contemporary environment.

Indigenous organisations have to find common ground between the governing processes, organisational structures it wants to develop and the cultural values and traditions of its members. It needs to reflect the unique culture of the local community and it must have ongoing support from that community to survive.

Problems may arise for Indigenous organisations and leaders if they do not recognise that ongoing legitimacy is locally grounded in often culturally-based relationships and ways of doing things. Achieving cultural legitimacy and support from community members can be difficult, especially when many communities have a mix of cultural traditions.

Practical capacity and cultural legitimacy go hand in hand and reinforce each other

Image: Yirra Yaakin



Practical capacity and cultural legitimacy go hand in hand and reinforce each other. When organisations and leaders lose cultural legitimacy with members it can affect their credibility with external stakeholders, who question whether the organisation or leader is capable of doing their job properly. At the same time, if an organisation and its leaders cannot deliver services effectively and get practical things done for the community, then they lose credibility with the community.

An organisation must know the different cultural groupings and interests among its members and in the wider community. It must consult with its members to understand what their concerns and priorities are and be open, fair and honest in dealings and decisions. It should state to members where it's heading, what the strategic plan is for getting there, what resources will be used along the way and report back to members on progress and problems. Organisations need to manage resources wisely and well and deliver services and outcomes to members and the wider community.

Successful organisations reflect their own cultural norms and values in the rules and processes they set up, the behaviours they allow and encourage and the cultural expectations they create for all the people involved, while still meeting western requirements as incorporated bodies.

In 2008 the IGA entrants displayed many methods of incorporating cultural norms and values into business practices. Some of the most common are;

- the governing Boards were composed of local Indigenous people or had Board members voted in by the members of the organisation, the majority of whom were the Indigenous stakeholders;
- the organisation is involved in continuous consultation with Indigenous community members at all levels especially elders;
- the organisation participates in or facilitates local Indigenous events and activities;
- the Board takes responsibility for incorporating cultural and local perspectives into the fabric of the organisation and;
- local protocols such as acknowledging country and sorry business are recognised and supported.

Organisation and culture

Cultural authority is an important aspect of legitimacy for governing bodies and is most often reflected by having members that represent the various communities, clans or language groups that they serve. A number of organisations also have traditional owners or elders on their Boards. Others have cultural mentors or working groups attend Board meetings to represent community opinions.

One organisation delegates authority on cultural issues to a committee of elders who advise the governing body. Many other organisations have cultural protocols woven throughout their policies and procedures, ensuring that important cultural observances, like law season, mourning practices and respect for elders, are part of the fabric of the organisation.

IDEAS THAT WORK

The Board of Directors at **Gannambarra Limited** is constituted by members representing the major Indigenous organisations in Wagga Wagga. This ensures community representation on the Board and also enables partnerships and networks with these organisations. The organisation has embraced the diversity of the different Indigenous groups around Wagga Wagga and actively participants in various Indigenous annual events and activities like community days, sporting events and school holiday events.

A number of organisations also have traditional owners or elders on their Boards

While it celebrates events such as NAIDOC collectively, follows protocols of acknowledging and welcoming visitors to country and gives respect and support for sorry business, **Mingaletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation** finds it foremost has to be responsive to changing and differing cultural norms. In order to do this Mingaletta maintains a high standard of community consultation to best ensure that the rights, culture and beliefs of people are respected.

Warakurna Artists' constitution reflects the priorities and aspirations of its members. Their business model is built on the cultural and creative energies of Warakurna residents. Warakurna Artists' Chairwoman, Eunice Porter, explains the importance of working together with other *Yarnangu* (Aboriginal) owned and operated art centres: "You know we all have to work under one wiltja (shelter). These are our businesses. They are here for our future. We have to teach our children our culture, language and stories. We are learning how to run a business and learning whitefella way and teaching them *Yarnangu way*. We are creating a bridge, learning together."

Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA) invites regular community input through live on-air discussions, feedback lines and community engagement at community and cultural events. The community is also invited to visit the station, phone in, and representatives of BIMA attend community events. Staff and the Board also act as conduits for community and cultural input into the organisation, by interacting with the community regularly and ensuring views, culture and traditions form a part of the daily operations and outputs of the organisation. The Board itself is made up of a range of representatives of the local Indigenous community, including elders.

The **South West Aboriginal Medical Service's** motto is 'Our Health Our Way' which is about Noongar people making decisions about their health in a Noongar way. The SWAMS ward system allows for communities to elect a member to the governing committee and it is this person's responsibility to speak on behalf of their community. Additionally SWAMS holds a variety of community consultations with elders, men, women and young people about issues including health, family violence, sexuality, stolen generations etc, with the underlying aim to build capacity within the community.



Image: Brambruk

Community and culture

If organisations wish to represent their communities, they must have ways of accessing the views of those people. Many organisations have feedback mechanisms for their services or consultation procedures to maintain communication with their stakeholders. Consultation procedures included annual reviews, workshops, forums or meetings on the cultural expectations and their fulfilment by organisations.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi was established by senior Aboriginal women from central Australian communities and is governed by these women in line with culturally-based values and beliefs which all of Waltja's policies, projects and activities follow. Waltja Management Committee meetings and other Waltja activities such as workshops are an important way for women to get together to talk about important issues and to have their voices heard. Workshops are delivered away from the community and from town centres, with all facilities and supplies provided to ensure members feel safe and valued. This allows for an evening program, driven by members, to take place which will include discussion, dance, painting and visiting family.

The **Winda Mura Aboriginal Corporation** was originally established in 1991 to ensure the protection and promotion of traditional owners and country. Traditional Gunditjmara country and people are always considered in Winda Mara decisions and program delivery. Winda Mara ensures that the same consideration that is provided to Gunditjmara is provided to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Winda Mara's service region in the far southwest of Victoria.

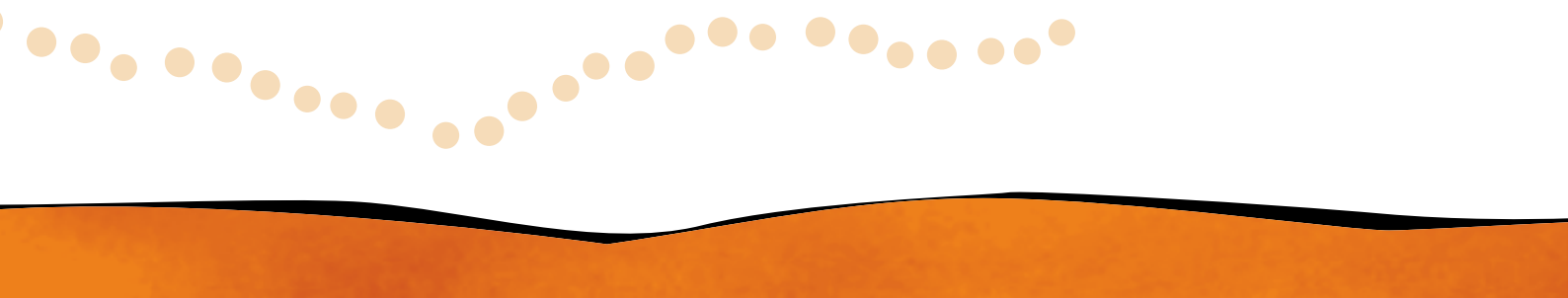
All members of the **Murrijabree Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Association** Board live within the shire and are very aware of the needs of the community and believes that NAIDOC is a very good measure of community support. Murrijabree runs the event each year and as many as 1000 people attend. The support for the community comes in many ways such as the elders involvement with the 'Gundooos' Playgroup where the Aunties offer advice and support to young parents.

Yamatji Marlpa Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation has 33 native title claim groups, who are represented in the organisation as Claim working groups, the grass-roots level of an extended decision-making structure. Members of working groups are nominated and authorised by the relevant Indigenous community, using methods which are appropriate to traditional law and custom and community norms. Commonly a working group consists of a dynamic and representative mix of people from the community – including women and young people – who are recognised as being future leaders. Each working group has its own traditional laws and customs, giving it uniquely tailored decision-making processes. When an Indigenous community is faced with issues which are broader than just land and heritage issues, mechanisms may be established for consultation with those who are 'historical' family groups or individuals in the area, even if they are not traditional people with cultural rights to speak.

Commonly a working group consists of a dynamic and representative mix of people from the community

The **Aboriginal Rainforest Council** has a system of protocols which ensures the right voices are heard on particular issues affecting the different Indigenous groups the organisation represents. For example, the protocols outline who should be consulted on fire management and men's' and women's issues. These protocols minimise 'consultation burnout' within the community. Additionally, each of the 18 Indigenous groups in the Wet Tropics is supported in speaking up for management issues or aspirations for country through facilitated small workshops on their country. These workshops are facilitated in culturally sensitive ways, often in partnership with the Wet Tropics Management Authority's Aboriginal Liaison Officers.

Koori Communications and Training has developed policies for government departments on how to communicate and consult with Aboriginal communities.



How to...

Support indigenous culture and values

Traditional Credit Union

Traditional Credit Union (TCU) was established 13 years ago in a little community in the Northern Territory (NT) by the name of Milingimbi. A number of banks had come to the community to provide their services, however they had not stayed and they left the people with no local services. The community council was not able to provide a cheque cashing service and the community store could only cash a certain amount after goods were also purchased. A number of community elders got together and, with the help of the local council and Aboriginal association, the idea of setting up a bank for the people was born.

They approached Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) and what was then ATSIC and together with some funding from the NT Government the first branch was opened in the Milingimbi community in December 1994. The TCU mission is to provide personalised quality financial services for Indigenous people and organisations in remote communities whilst respecting and valuing the cultural heritage of Indigenous Australians. The members of the credit union are shareholders and owners. TCU now has 13,000 members, \$10 million dollars in deposits and currently has over \$460,000 in the form of loans to purchase whitegoods, vehicles and furniture. There are 12 branches spread out across the Northern Territory.

For the past 13 years TCU has supported opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote communities. It provides services and education so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in these areas can have control over their financial security. TCU believes in putting its profits back into the communities that support it. A sponsorship program has been developed that allows people to apply for funding for a sporting team, academic course, cultural event or any other worthwhile cause.

To build staff and management practices around cultural and community values TCU is committed to:

- Consulting with elders and Traditional Land Owners.
- Providing training initiatives to support Indigenous young people in work readiness and financial awareness.
- Offering financial literacy counselling to all community members.
- Remote Indigenous communities are represented by four Indigenous Board members.
- An identification system which is Indigenous focused, meaning members can be identified by an elder and an elected Council member instead of the standard 100 points of identification.
- An employment policy whereby TCU is 100% staffed in remote Indigenous locations by people from the community who speak the local language.
- Having opening and closing hours based around community life.
- Being members of the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project which is part of the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy, and encourages a partnership between individual companies and the Australian Government aimed at generating more jobs for Indigenous Australians.
- Company representatives involved in consulting with Aboriginal people are patient and open minded when negotiating in sensitive situations.
- Recognising that community life takes precedence over all other issues and assisting members where this impacts on doing business with the Credit Union or other organisations. TCU is sensitive to law-business (initiation ceremonies), deaths, funerals, kinship issues and taboos, and is prepared for last minute postponements in the event of a death or urgent business.

6 Future planning



Another key element of good governance is the ability to think strategically and plan for the future. Mapping out a business or development plan allows an organisation to set goals and to monitor their progress. A strategic planning process guides the organisation in the direction decided by its governing body and members, and provides staff with the opportunity to understand how their work contributes to the overall aims of the organisation.

Over 80 per cent of the organisations who applied for the 2008 IGAs indicated that they had some sort of strategic, operational or business plan. These varied in the time they covered from one to five years and many of the longer plans included shorter term targets. Such plans were often drawn up by the Board and the executive and included all-staff or member workshops to ensure every stakeholder had been accounted for. Applicants generally drew on previous experience or success and many had accountability mechanisms in place such as reports reviewing achievements at six month intervals. Organisations that hadn't developed specific plans still had clear and concise ideas about its direction. Two organisations had cultural plans in their development schedules. The main components of the planning documents were analysis of business units, targets to be achieved, both short and long term goals, aspirations/opportunities and measures to be implemented.



IDEAS THAT WORK

All **Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation** staff and Board members are involved in the development of a three to five year business plan which includes milestones and performance targets. This plan is seen as a living document to be referred to and reviewed regularly. Six-monthly reports against performance indicators are reviewed by the Board with discussion about strategies to address areas of concern. A comprehensive Annual Report is developed each year which also includes a report against key performance indicators.

The development of the strategic plan for **Mingaletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation** was assisted by the employment of an Aboriginal Community Development Officer. The contents were formed through a consultative approach within the broader Indigenous communities of the Woy Woy Peninsula area and members and staff of the corporation. The plan has objectives geared towards addressing social inequities, developing relationships in service delivery and creating opportunities for community development.

Organisations that hadn't developed specific plans still had clear and concise ideas about its direction

Image: Papulankutja

South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) undertakes a monthly reporting system to ensure that it is achieving its targets. These targets are set at the beginning of the financial year in consultation with the governing committee, staff and funding bodies. All programs are evaluated on a quarterly basis with reports prepared on activities undertaken. SWAMS held its first organisational review in March 2007 and intends to undertake this on an annual basis. At this review (which involved management, staff and governing committee members) all aspects of the organisation are discussed and the meeting also provides the platform for preparation of the next financial year's budget, business plan and action plan.

Key performance indicators for **Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Service** are established in every program. A program summary form is completed that includes the program outcomes and evaluation process. Key performance indicators are reportable by staff working in specific program areas and performance against the indicators is monitored monthly and annually. In addition, the Board and CEO monitor the implementation and outcomes of the Winnunga five year business plan.

Jarlmanagah Burru Aboriginal Corporation has a range of business plans covering its diverse operations. For example, there is a business plan for the community store, tourism operation and delivery of essential services and housing needs. They also have a community layout plan that has a major impact on future infrastructure development within the community including housing and commercial operations. This is updated as required with the assistance of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

The **Traditional Credit Union (TCU)** develops an annual strategic plan looking at strategic analysis and an action plan. In the strategic analysis, the senior management team conducts a review of TCU's environment (for example the political, social, economic and technical environment). From there, for strategic direction what TCU should do as a result of the major issues and opportunities identified is discussed. This includes what overall goals TCU should achieve, and their methods for achieving them. The goals are designed and worded as much as possible to be specific, measurable, acceptable to those working to achieve the goals, realistic, timely, extending the capabilities of those working to achieve the goals, and rewarding to them as well. The action plan directs how the strategic goals will be accomplished, specifying responsibilities and timelines with each objective – or who needs to do what and by when. The strategic plan is presented to the Board for approval along with the annual budget.

Financial planning

While 12 of the nominees for the 2008 Awards had separate financial plans, all those who applied had ideas about how best to improve their finances in the coming years. Many were working towards being self-sufficient and through both reduced expenditure and financial discipline while concurrently generating more income through commercial or corporate sponsorship, partnerships, grant funding or project-related funding. Most of the organisations understood the importance of financial accountability and had records maintained and kept according to statutory accounting standards with all bookkeeping practices organised by a funding or administrative team.

Key performance indicators are reportable by staff working in specific program areas and performance against the indicators is monitored monthly

IDEAS THAT WORK

Tangentyere Council is wholly funded by grants. This means it has to focus on effective service delivery and planning and report either quarterly or six-monthly on each grant. Grants are externally audited each year by an accounting firm.

Gannambarra Limited's plan is to maintain financial discipline, to spend its means, ensure prompt payments to creditors and preparation of accounts receivable, and to ensure records are kept and maintained according to statutory accounting standards. The organisation is also planning to build a reserve of funds to use strategically as issues arise.

Murrijabree Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Association's financial plan is to be self sufficient in three years. Murrijabree has very efficient book-keeping practices with professional people employed to manage their finances.

Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation's (MG Corporation) current financial planning and budgeting is limited to its annual operational funds. As it builds a commercial business and income streams, it will be able to enact more effective financial planning. The organisation has a Community Foundation Trust which has completed an investment policy to plan for the growth of investment funds. MG also has a Development Trust to build a substantial income stream from commercial business opportunities.



Image: MG Corporation

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi's 2008 strategic plan includes diversifying its income streams to include more fundraising capital. The Management Committee has decided to create a funding base for member-driven projects and arranged for thousands of paintings and hand-painted diary covers to be sold with funds to go into the organisation. It will continue to seek funding from governments and philanthropic organisations to support ongoing youth services programs, child care, aged care and disability services, and publications.

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service has decided that over the next five years, Winnunga should move from 10% to 20% self funding. In addition, the ACT and Commonwealth governments have recommended that Winnunga move from annual funding to three-year block funding which is in recognition of Winnunga's exemplary record in finance management. Winnunga is also in the preliminary stages of establishing a corporate fundraising strategy that would see specific programs funded through corporate and community sponsorship.

How to... Plan for the future

Wurli Wurlinjang Aboriginal Corporation

Wurli Wurlinjang was established to provide an Aboriginal Medical Service to the Indigenous people of Katherine and surrounding areas in the Northern Territory. Wurli Wurlinjang has been a corporation since 1991 and over the last 18 years it has achieved its goals through coordinated governance skills. One of these skills, as recognized by the medical service, is future planning. Wurli Wurlinjang has a strategic plan with five key organisational goals aimed at realising quality in health as a reality rather than an ideal. These five goals drive the business and development plans for the organisation both in the short and long-term.

1. To ensure services remain culturally appropriate and are accessible to all Indigenous people of the Katherine community.
2. To nurture strength and cultural security of members is engendered through mutual respect, integrity, fairness and equality.
3. Through encouraging a desire to develop and enhance their professional careers, and supporting this through the provision of personal and professional development which offers genuine career security and opportunity.
4. To create sustainability and enable Wurli Wurlinjang to maximise the benefits which can be realised from enhancements in financial and human resources.
5. Wurli Wurlinjang understands effective collaboration at the local, regional, state and national level will underpin the effort in improving Indigenous health.

The strategic plan can be seen in more detail at the Wurli Wurlinjang website <http://www.wurli.org.au/>



Governance diagnostic tool



Image: 2007 Workshop

Regular evaluation and review are important elements of good governance. Organisations need to monitor their progress to ensure they are meeting both internal and external requirements. Internally, this means meeting the outcomes of the business or strategic plan, and externally, it means delivering the services to the community and complying with funding procedures. Tracking and evaluating allows organisations to adapt and improve policies and programs if necessary, preventing workplace stagnation and obsolete operational procedures.

This quick diagnostic tool was developed using an analysis of the applications for the 2005 and 2006 Indigenous Governance Awards. The answers to the following questions will provide a good indication of how well an organisation is travelling, and what governance areas need to be developed and strengthened. The tool is particularly useful if used at all levels of the organisation – governing body, management and staff.

Governance diagnostic tool

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The governing body of my organisation is clear about their governance roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The governing body of my organisation provides strong, clear guidance for our future direction, plans and goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The governing body of my organisation is not undermined by internal conflicts, factions or entrenched differences of opinions between members of the governing body.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The members of my governing body have a clear understanding of the financial viability and management of our organisation, and are engaged in planning its future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The resources of my organisation are well-managed and used effectively and properly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The governing body of my organisation communicates well with staff, management and community members, and there is a high level of trust between them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The leaders of our organisation have strong, valuable networks with other Aboriginal leaders and leaders in government and the wider region.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My organisation has policies and procedures to make sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. There is a clear separation of powers and responsibilities between our governing body and management in the day-to-day operation of our organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. My organisation provides induction and training for the members of our governing committee that prepares them to carry out their governance responsibilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Meetings in my organisation are well managed and we use sound decision making processes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Governance diagnostic tool

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. My organisation has effective processes for communicating important issues and decisions to its members and the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My organisation has professional development programs for every level of the organisation – the governing body, management and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. My organisation makes sure our members have a say in planning for the future and how our services are provided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. My organisation seeks feedback from our members about important issues and decisions it needs to make.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. My organisation has systems for evaluating and managing the work performance of staff and management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. My governing body has a system for periodically evaluating its own performance, and implementing follow-up improvements in its governance arrangements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. My organisation has plans and strategic documents to guide and support decision making at all levels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. My organisation works to recognise and develop the skills and potential of our young and emerging leaders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. My organisation has procedures for fairly dealing with disputes and complaints from staff and members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. My organisation would effectively manage an organisational crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. My organisation is flexible and able respond to new challenges and opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. My organisation recognises and makes provisions for the cultural life of staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. My organisation is proud of doing business in an Indigenous way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

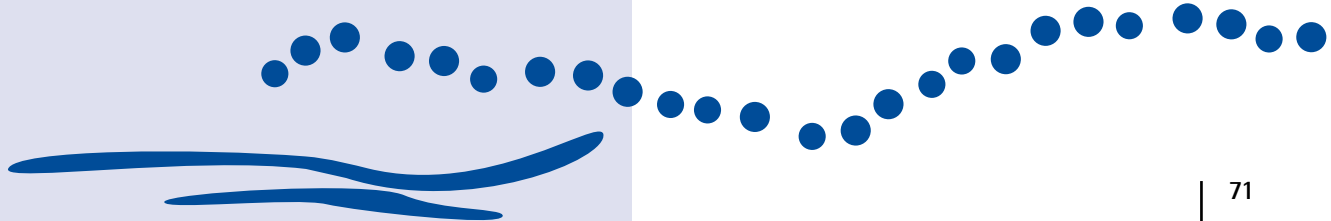




Image: 2007 Workshop

Sharing the stories

2007 Sharing Success Workshops

The 2006 Awards demonstrated once again the breadth and depth of Indigenous achievement across Australia. By sharing these stories of success with the wider community and with Indigenous organisations we all learn from each other and continue building good governance.

In 2007, Reconciliation Australia, in partnership with BHP Billiton, hosted three Sharing Success workshops in regional New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland. The workshops were an opportunity for leaders of local Indigenous organisations to share stories with finalists from the Indigenous Governance Awards about what has worked for them, and how they got started on building their governance.

A workbook was produced based on the knowledge gained from the IG Awards and the Indigenous Community Governance Research Project. It contained practical ideas, information and tools on developing good governance and how to get there through strong leadership.

When it comes to good governance, we can all learn from each other. The workbooks and the outcomes from the workshops are available on the website at www.reconciliation.org.au/igawards.

2009 Sharing Success Workshops

In 2009 Reconciliation Australia, again in partnership with BHP Billiton, will host several Sharing Success workshops in regional Queensland and Western Australia.

2010 Indigenous Governance Awards

The call for applications for the 2010 Indigenous Governance Awards will be announced late in 2009.

“Blackfellas talking to blackfellas about how to make things better for blackfellas”

Comment from a participant at a 2007 workshop

Contacts for 2008 applicants



Aboriginal Employment Strategy, NSW

Created in 1997, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy increases employment opportunities in the regional town of Moree to help reduce the racial divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Its role is to gauge and source Aboriginal job seekers and place them into sustainable employment.

Phone: 02 8571 0999

Email: glebe@aboriginaleS.com.au

Website: www.aboriginalemploymentstrategy.com.au

Aboriginal Rainforest Council, QLD

The Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC) was established in 2004 through the development of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area Regional Agreement, an agreement between 18 Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups and land management agencies with statutory responsibilities in the Wet Tropics region. The central principle of the agreement is the recognition of Rainforest Aboriginal people's rights and interests and to afford them the opportunity to define and negotiate their own priorities, needs and aspirations for management of the Wet Tropics. The ARC broadly represents the traditional owner groups of the region in land and cultural heritage management matters.

Phone: 07 4035 5213

Email: arcinc1@westnet.com.au

Aboriginal Urban Services, WA

Aboriginal Urban Services was formed in the northern suburbs of Perth in 1986 to support and enhance the capacity of local Aboriginal families, children and youth. The organisation has had a high success rate working with troubled and disadvantaged youth in schools, courts and the justice system. Aboriginal Urban Services also provides advice to the government on issues affecting Indigenous families.

Phone: 08 9342 1201

Email: ausc@bigpond.com

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, NT

Created in 1981 Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) provides for the development, use and management of the APY lands, which it holds the freehold title to on behalf of its members. The APY lands occupy 103,000 square kilometres in the northwest corner of South Australia.

Phone: 08 8950 5400

Email: gmapy@anangu.com.au

Brambuk – The National Park and Cultural Centre (Gariwerd Enterprises Pty Ltd), VIC

In 1991, Gariwerd Enterprises Pty Ltd was established as a business entity to operate Brambuk – The National Park and Cultural Centre (previously the Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre). Brambuk's mission is to document, recover, conserve and present the Indigenous culture of the Gariwerd/Grampians region. It operates a cultural centre and keeping place, education and cultural programs, Grampians National Park visitor information services, a retail outlet and a cafe. It also plays an important role in employing and training Aboriginal people, educating the broader community, encouraging reconciliation, advancing Aboriginal people and tourism in the region, and promoting a greater understanding of Western Victoria's Aboriginal peoples.

Phone: 03 5361 4000
Email: jlark@brambuk.com.au
Website: www.brambuk.com.au

Brisbane Indigenous Media Association, QLD

Established in 1992, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA) provides a voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the media, and by doing so it contributes to the cultural and economic independence of Indigenous people in south-east Queensland. BIMA services Indigenous communities locally and nationally, providing regular updates and a forum for discussion on relevant issues, and promoting traditional and contemporary culture. BIMA delivers accredited media training to Indigenous people and is committed to the development of young people as future community leaders.

Phone: 07 3892 0100
Email: tiga@989fm.com.au
Website: www.bimaprojects.org.au

Bunya Wakka Wakka Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, QLD

Formed in 2005, Bunya Wakka Wakka Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation protects cultural heritage and assists the community with long term sustainable projects. It also aims to enhance the conditions for the local Indigenous people through business development, employment and education.

Phone: 07 4168 3044
Email: lorraine@wakkawakka.com.au

Central Queensland Indigenous Development Ltd, QLD

Created in 2004, Central Queensland Indigenous Development coordinates the regional Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). It manages CDEP activities to increase long-term employment and training, and to generate business development opportunities for Indigenous people. It also provides health, wellbeing and intervention programs, as well as culturally appropriate services to empower individuals to develop and build Indigenous communities.

Phone: 07 4927 4248
Email: rachel@cqid.com.au
Website: cqid.com.au

Dharriwaa Elders Group, NSW

Dharriwaa Elders Group was established in 1999 and incorporated in 2005. Full members are Aboriginal people over 60 years of age who live in Walgett. The Group encourages and supports the elders and their leadership activities, and assists them to work for the development of the community. They conduct programs to promote unity and improve relationships between elders and other age groups. They also manage and promote Aboriginal cultural heritage and natural resources.

Phone: 02 6828 2619
Email: info@dharrivaaeldersgroup.org.au
Website: www.dharrivaaeldersgroup.org.au

Dorrigo Plateau Local Aboriginal Land Council, NSW

Formed in 1999, the Dorrigo Plateau Land Council aims to improve the social and economic well being of the local Indigenous people. It works to protect cultural heritage as well as provide housing for the community.

Phone: 02 6657 2606





Image: Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

Gannambarra Limited, NSW

Gannambarra Enterprises was established in 2001 to help create employment and business opportunities for Indigenous people in Wagga Wagga. It offers employment related services to Indigenous clients such as providing pre-employment training, placing participants in work activities to gain skills, on the job training, and assisting participants to find employment. Gannambarra also provides culturally appropriate mentoring services to clients and employers.

Phone: 02 6925 7233

Email: jokerenyang@gannambarra.org.au

Website: www.gannambarra.org.au

Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, NSW

The Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation was formed in 1983 to provide programs for the local Aboriginal community, and to maintain and promote Aboriginal culture throughout the region.

Phone: 02 4228 1585

Email: culturaldevelopment@exemail.com.au

Website: www.aboriginalartdirectory.com/shop/museum/illawarra-aboriginal-corporation-culture-centre.php

Inala Wangarra, QLD

Inala Wangarra was created in 2003 as an Indigenous community development organisation. Its role is to address issues and needs identified by the community such as lack of jobs and training opportunities. Inala Wangarra provides activities for young people, hosts community events and creates linkages to employment.

Phone: 07 3217 0119

Email: inalawangarra@hotmail.com

Website: www.bebo.com/InalaW4

Indigenous Harvest Australia Cooperative Ltd., WA

Formed in 2006, Indigenous Harvest Australia (IHA) generates independent wealth and income for Indigenous harvesters of the kullari plum in Broome and surrounding communities and outstations on the Dampier Peninsula. The kullari plum is a wild harvested bush fruit that IHA markets to the native food and nutraceutical (nutrition and pharmaceutical) markets. Value added products will be launched in 2008.

Phone: 08 6467 7780

Email: ihacooperative@optusnet.com.au

Website: www.gubinge.com/index-noscript.php

Jarlmadangah Burru Aboriginal Corporation, WA

In 1987, Jarlmadangah Burru Aboriginal Corporation was created in the far north west of Australia to establish a sustainable community so the Nyikina Mangala people could return to country to maintain their traditional culture. The organisation encourages and supports the personal development of its members by dealing with social, economic and cultural issues. The community has set a high priority on early education and improving childcare facilities.

Phone: 08 9192 2335

Email: jarlmadangah1@bigpond.com

Website: www.jarlmadangah.com

Koori Communications, NSW

Koori Communications and Training was established in 2005 to assist Indigenous people to reach their training and communications goals. Qualified Workplace Trainers and Assessors devise training programs for Indigenous people and youth groups so they can learn to do the job themselves. Koori Communications and Training has gained sponsorship through the results of its Indigenous based, grass-roots approach to training programs.

Phone: 02 9327 5681

Email: kooricomunications@hotmail.com

Website: www.kooricomunications.com

Kura Yerlo Incorporated, SA

In 1986, Kura Yerlo was formed to offer holistic services to Aboriginal people within the Adelaide region. It targets four main groups - traditional, fringe, country and urban - who have common needs such as housing, legal rights, medical services and employment, but who also have distinctive lifestyles. Kura Yelo has a general purpose community centre and runs a number of programs including childcare, youth, fitness and health, gym and Kararrendi disability.

Phone: 08 8449 7367

Email: kycmngt@arcom.com.au

Website: www.kurayerloinc.org.au

Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation, WA

In 1987, the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre was established, out of which Magabala Books was created to restore, preserve and maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Magabala Books records, promotes and publishes a body of work by Indigenous creators. It also assists and encourages local people to pass on their history, and makes the wider community aware of the wealth of Indigenous tradition and culture. Magabala Books protects and educates in matters of copyright, and promotes acknowledgment of and respect for Indigenous culture through the use of both published works and the electronic media. Magabala Books also provides employment and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Phone: 08 9192 1991

Email: suzie@magabala.com

Website: www.magabala.com



Image: Warakurna Artists

Mingaletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation, NSW

Established in 2002, Mingaletta enhances the quality of life of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by creating opportunities and developing relationships with service providers. Mingaletta provides ongoing referral, advocacy and support to local Indigenous people, as well as information and advice about available resources and services. It promotes and protects land and culture, ensuring that decision making is culturally inclusive for Indigenous people, and assists members with finding independence, identity and self empowerment. Mingaletta also provides the non Aboriginal community with knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal, protocols, customs, culture and rights.

Phone: 02 4342 7515

Email: mingalettaatsic@yahoo.com.au

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and Community Working Parties, NSW

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) and the 16 Community Working Parties (CWPs) are the peak regional Indigenous governance structures for the Murdi Paaki region in far west NSW. These structures were established to provide governance support to the local Indigenous communities to enable them to manage their affairs, build sustainable communities and determine their future. The MPRA provides a voice for the Indigenous people of the region, with governance, leadership and empowerment as its central themes. It also advocates for increased service delivery as well as improved social and economic outcomes. Together with the CWPs, MPRA coordinates government activity across the local, state and federal levels, and builds partnerships and networks within the government, corporate and philanthropic sectors.

Phone: 0428 235 590

Email: mp.regionalassembly@mprec.org.au

Website: mprec.org.au



Murriajabree Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Association Inc., QLD

The role of Murriajabree is to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Deception Bay. It was created in 2004 to represent the community at state and federal level, and also to work to improve the local conditions. Murriajabree works very closely with young mums, babies and families.

Phone: 07 3293 1539
Email: Murriajabree@gmail.com
Website: www.Murriajabree.com.au

Point Pearce Aboriginal Corporation, SA

Created in 2007, the Point Pearce Aboriginal Corporation aims to foster a better, stronger, self-determined and self-managed community as the basis for a strong future for Aboriginal people residing on Yorke Peninsula. It provides day to day management of the community, including delivering housing, employment and training, education, health and farming services.

Phone: 08 8836 7205
Email: ppac@netyp.com.au or pointpearce.reception@health.sa.gov.au

South West Aboriginal Medical Service, WA

South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) was created in 1997 to provide a health service for Indigenous people in the south-west of Western Australia. As well as providing a forum for Aboriginal people to discuss their health requirements, needs and grievances, SWAMS also sponsors, promotes and encourages the maintenance and renewal of traditional Aboriginal medicine and culture.

Phone: 08 9791 2779
Email: g.humes@swams.com.au
Website: www.swams.com.au

Tangentyere Council, NT

Tangentyere Council was established in 1979 to assist Aboriginal people living on the outskirts of Alice Springs to gain legal tenure over the land in order to obtain water, electricity and housing, and to therefore improve their living conditions. Tangentyere provides culturally sensitive, sustainable services and programs to Alice Springs Town Camp communities, and fosters and supports the aspirations its members.

Phone: 08 8951 4222
Email: tracey.brand@tangentyere.org.au
Website: www.tangentyere.org.au

Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre Inc, NSW

In 1999, the Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre was created as an early intervention centre for Indigenous boys at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system, so that they might have an opportunity to learn, grow and change in a supportive environment. As well as managing a residential centre for 12-15yr old Indigenous male youth, Tirkandi Inaburra also delivers an innovative learning program which empowers participants to develop and draw on their own resilience in order to take responsibility for their lives, and to develop strategies to deal with their problems whilst promoting cultural pride, identity and self-confidence.

Phone: 02 6954 4800
Email: cmurray@tirkandi.org.au
Website: tirkandi.org.au

Traditional Credit Union, NT

The Traditional Credit Union (TCU) was established in 1994 in the small community of Milingimbi. Its mission is to provide personalised quality financial services for Indigenous people and organisations in remote communities, whilst respecting and valuing the cultural heritage of Indigenous Australians. The members of the credit union are shareholders and owners and there are currently 13,000 members, \$10 million in deposits and over \$460,000 in the form of loans to purchase whitegoods, vehicles and furniture. There are 12 branches across the Northern Territory

Phone: 08 8999 0777
Email: tdm@tcu.com.au
Website: www.tcu.com.au

Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation, NSW

The Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation was created in 1994 as a community based organisation for the Aboriginal people in Singleton. Ungooroo supports the local community in the region by providing links to essential services that include health, education, employment, and family stability. Ungooroo utilises the expertise of both mainstream and Aboriginal organisations, enabling community members to maintain their identity and cultural significance.

Phone: 02 6571 5111
Email: ungooroo@bigpond.com
Website: www.ungooroo.com.au

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) Co-Op Ltd, VIC

Formed in 1977, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Co-Op was a response to the lack of culturally appropriate services for vulnerable and at risk Aboriginal children in Victoria. Today it continues to promote and provide culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Phone: 03 8388 1855
Email: vacca@vacca.org
Website: www.vacca.org

Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Co-operative, NSW

Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS) was established in 1986 to provide primary health care services to the general population living in Walgett and in the local communities that WAMS serves. The Annual Report identified that 40% of clients who received services from the clinic during the year were non-Aboriginal. WAMS provides high quality, accessible and confidential health care and dental services, many of which are also provided on an outreach basis to more remote towns.

Phone: 02 6828 1611
Email: walgettams@bigpond.com
Website: www.walgettams.com.au

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi, NT

In 1997, Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi was created to support community development and self-determination for remote Aboriginal communities in central Australia. Waltja provides or supports a variety of services including child care, youth programs, aged care, disability services, management support for women's centres, and a range of training services. Waltja offers training for and supports the development of community services that provide employment and professional development for local Aboriginal people.

Phone: 08 8953 4488
Email: manager@waltja.org.au
Website: www.waltja.org

Warakurna Artists, WA

Warakurna Artists was established in 2004 to support the production and marketing of culturally intense, artistically rich works of art and in doing so return a broad range of benefits to individuals and the community. It facilitates the production and sale of artworks, provides professional development, employment and access to small business opportunities for remote community residents, while also supporting cultural maintenance and renewal, and giving access to independent income for local Indigenous people.

Phone: 08 8955 8099
Email: art@warakurnaartists.com.au
Website: www.warakurnaartists.com.au

Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation, VIC

Created in 1991, Winda Mara provides services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the far southwest of Victoria. Its objective is to strengthen, revive and develop Aboriginal culture and to own traditional homelands, sites and objects. It works towards improving the health, housing and education of Aboriginal people by creating employment and establishing enterprises.

Phone: 03 5527 2051
Email: wmac@windamara.com

Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Service, ACT

Formed in 1988 in Canberra, Winnunga Nimmitjiah provides consistent and effective services that improve health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT and surrounds. As well as providing holistic, culturally appropriate health care, Winnunga partners with and auspices other community organisations that provide services to local Indigenous people.

Phone: 02 6282 6220

Email: winadmin@winnunga.org.au

Website: www.winnunga.org.au

Wurli Wurlinjang Aboriginal Corporation, NT

Wurli Wurlinjang was created in Katherine in 1972 and incorporated in 1991. It provides high quality, progressive and culturally appropriate health services to the local community. Its purpose is to improve the health and the quality of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the region, giving them the opportunity to reach levels of health similar to non-Indigenous Australians.

Phone: 08 8971 1156

Email: amanda.hand@wurli.org.au

Website: www.wurli.org.au

Yamatji Marlpa Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation, WA

Established in 1994, Yamatji Marlpa Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation (YMBBMAC) is the Native Title Representative Body for the Yamatji and Pilbara regions of Western Australia. It provides support to native title claimants and holders to make various applications (including claimant and compensation applications) and to respond to proposed future acts (any proposed activity/development on land or waters that may affect native title rights). YMBBMAC also assists traditional owners to gain rightful recognition of their culture, acceptance as native title holders of their land, achieve social justice outcomes and engage in appropriate and sustainable economic development.

Phone: 08 9268 7000

Email: acargill@yamatji.org.au

Website: www.yamatji.org.au



Image: Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service

Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation, WA

In 2006, a native title Indigenous land use agreement was negotiated between the Miriuwung Gajerrong people and the state government of Western Australia and other parties in relation to the expansion of the Ord River irrigation area. The Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Corporation (MG Corporation) was established to keep Miriuwung Gajerrong law and culture alive and strong and to recognise the authority of, and to work with, the Kariel or senior people. The MG Corporation is also responsible for implementing the Ord Final Agreement, and for developing the benefits and opportunities that flow from it on behalf of the Miriuwung Gajerrong people.

Phone: 08 9169 2590

Email: julie.melbourne@yawoorroongmgcorp.com.au

Website: www.yawoorroongmgcorp.com.au

Yirra Yaakin Aboriginal Corporation, WA

Created in 1993, Yirra Yaakin evolved from an Aboriginal youth workshop program. Today it enables Indigenous communities to celebrate their culture by telling and performing their own stories in their own way. Yirra Yaakin has three main areas of operation. The first involves mainstage theatrical productions written, directed and performed by Indigenous artists. The second is issues-based theatre performances and workshops that tackle specific social concerns in the community. The third is ensuring there are Indigenous trainees learning skills to work in the theatre industry.

Phone: 08 9202 1966

Email: michelle@yirrayaakin.asn.au

Website: www.yirrayaakin.asn.au

Judging Panel 2008

MICK DODSON AM (CHAIRMAN)



Professor Mick Dodson is a member of the Yawuru peoples, the traditional Aboriginal owners of land and waters around Broome. He is Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University and

Professor of law at the ANU College of Law. A Board member of Reconciliation Australia and the Lingjari Foundation, Mick was a founding member and Chairman of the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre. He is Chairman of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Mick has recently been reappointed a member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (until 2010). He helped craft the text of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, overwhelmingly adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007.

Previously Mick was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (April 1993 to January 1998), was Counsel assisting the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and was Director of the Northern Land Council. He is the 2009 Australian of the Year.

LEAH ARMSTRONG



Leah Armstrong has been a founding Director and employee of Yarreen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation since its establishment in 1992, and is currently its Executive Director. She assists Yarreen to expand its

commercial ventures and to encourage further economic opportunities for associate organisations. Leah actively promotes the need for Indigenous communities to be more proactive in establishing successful economic ventures. Other Directorships and committee appointments include Indigenous Business Australia (since 2001), Chair of the Aboriginal Business Roundtable NSW and member of the Board of Vocational Education and Training NSW.

GARY BANKS



Gary Banks AO has been Chairman of the Productivity Commission since its inception in April 1998 and has headed national inquiries on a variety of public policy and regulatory topics. Gary also chairs the Review of Government Service

Provision which produces the annual *Report on Government Service* and the two yearly report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*. Previously he worked at the Centre for International Economics and has been a consultant to the

OECD and World Bank. He was also a member of the GATT Secretariat in Geneva and Visiting Fellow at the Trade Policy Research Centre, London. In 2007 he was made an officer of the Order of Australia for services to the development of public policy in microeconomic reform and regulation.

MR EDDIE CUBILLO



Eddie Cubillo is an Aboriginal man with strong family links throughout the Northern Territory. He obtained a Bachelor of Laws Degree in 2001 and the following year was admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. He is currently working as the Indigenous Employment Consultant at the University of South Australia. He is also studying part-time a Master of Laws (International Law and International Relations).

ALLAN JAMES



Allan James is currently Manager Sustainable Development with BHP Billiton Nickel West. He has responsibility for managing Nickle Wests pastoral operations, Heritage and community portfolio's. This incorporates responsibility for the coordination of its Indigenous Participation Strategy that effectively delivers employment, training, business development and outcomes with Indigenous communities in the regions in which Nickel West operates. His work involves fostering community inter-relationships and cross cultural understanding. Allan previously worked with Argyle Diamonds in the East Kimberley, primarily responsible for Indigenous business development in line with Argyle's Regional Participation Agreement.

SIMON LONGSTAFF



Simon Longstaff is Executive Director of St James Ethics Centre, an independent forum that examines ethical issues arising in Australian society and abroad. A philosopher with a particular interest in ethics, Simon has worked on Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria and has worked and studied in NSW, Tasmania and Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

HEATHER RIDOUT



Mrs Heather Ridout is Chief Executive of the Australian Industry Group – the leading industry association in Australia representing businesses in the manufacturing, construction, automotive, ICT, transport, defence, labour hire and other industries. She is a leading figure in the public policy debate and is a member of a number of policy setting and consultative groups including Skills Australia; the Business Advisory Group on Workplace Relations, Infrastructure Australia and the Henry Review of Taxation. She heads an organisation committed to helping Australian industry to meet the challenge of change. Its focus is on building competitive industries through global integration, human capital development, productive and flexible workplace relations practices, infrastructure development and innovation.

KERRIE TIM



Kerrie Tim is a Senior Executive within the Australian Public Service Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. A graduate of the University of Queensland, Kerrie's extensive experience in the public sector includes the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services and its predecessor, ATSIC, the Australian Public Service Commission, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Education. Kerrie is a former Executive Director to the Queensland Government having worked within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and before that led the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. Kerrie is actively committed to social justice and for the past twenty years, in her spare time, has focussed her efforts towards ending racism and developing leaders. Kerrie's international experience includes representing Australian governments in discussions in the Philippines, United States and Canada and leading peer counselling workshops on ending racism in South Africa, Israel, and New Zealand.

Other resources

Reconciliation Australia
www.reconciliation.org.au

Indigenous Governance Awards
www.reconciliation.org.au/igawards

Reconciliation Australia: Rowena Withers and Robert Beattie (eds) 2006. *Celebrating Indigenous Governance: Success Stories of the 2005 Indigenous Governance Awards*, Reconciliation Australia, Old Parliament House, Canberra.

Reconciliation Australia: Rowena Withers and Jessica Jeeves (eds) 2008. *Celebrating Indigenous Governance: Success Stories of the 2006 Indigenous Governance Awards*, Reconciliation Australia, Old Parliament House, Canberra.

The Indigenous Community Governance Research Project
www.anu.edu.au/caepr
It contains material and resources on Indigenous community governance such as:

Community Governance Newsletter

Hunt, J. and Smith, D.E. 2006. *Ten Key Messages from the preliminary findings of the Indigenous Community Governance Project, 2005*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Hunt, J. and Smith, D.E. 2006. *Building Indigenous community governance in Australia: Preliminary research findings*, CAEPR Working Paper No. 31, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Hunt, J. and Smith, D.E. 2007. *Indigenous Community Governance Project: Year two research findings*, CAEPR Working Paper No. 36

Hunt, J., Smith, D., Garling, S. and Sanders, W. 2008. *Contested Governance*, CAEPR Monograph No. 29.

Behrendt, Glanville and Laing (eds) 2007 *Ngiya: Talk the Law, Volume 1, Governance in Indigenous Communities*, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of NSW, Sydney

Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
www.anu.edu.au/caepr

Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations
www.orac.gov.au

The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. www.ksg.harvard.edu/hpaied/

The Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management and Policy, at the Udall Centre, University of Arizona.
www.udallcenter.arizona.edu/nativenations

The Institute on Governance (Canada)
www.iog.ca

Glossary

Accountability is being legally and culturally obligated to account for your actions or decisions to members, community or some other authority.

Capacity is the combination of people, skills, institutions, resources and organisational abilities, powers and practices that enable a group of people to reach their own goals over time.

Character is the sum total of an individual's personality traits and the link between a person's values and their behavior.

Communicating is the ability to express oneself effectively in individual and group situations, either orally or in writing. It involves a sender transmitting an idea to a receiver.

Conflict of interest occurs when a governing body, elected member, or a CEO/Manager of an organisation profits at the expense of the organisation they serve, or when a person's own self-interest conflicts with their official duty to act in the best interests of the organisation.

Consensus is an opinion, agreement or position reached by a group as a whole.

Delegative leadership is a style of leadership in which the leader entrusts decision making to an employee or a group of employees. The leader is still responsible for their decisions.

Diversity is an environment where the full potential of all employees can be used by paying attention to, and taking into account, their differences in work background, experience, age, gender, race, ethnic origin, physical abilities, religious belief, sexual orientation, and other perceived differences.

Environment is the political, strategic, or operational context within the organisation or outside the organisation.

Ethical climate is the 'feel of the organisation' about the activities that have ethical content, or those aspects of the work environment that constitute ethical behaviour. The ethical climate is the feel about whether things are done right, or the feel of whether people are behaving the way they ought to behave.

Evaluation is judging the worth, quality or significance of people, ideas or actions. Standards or indicators can be used to measure if actions outlined in plans have been achieved.



Image: Tirkandi Inaburra

Governance is about how groups, organisations and communities organise themselves to achieve their visions or goals. This means they need to have processes and structures in place to be able to:

- assign and exercise power and authority
- make the important decisions
- enforce their decisions
- resolve conflicts and negotiate with others
- plan their future strategic directions
- work together to develop and implement their rules, responsibilities and obligations.

Goals are broad statements of long-range purposes, qualitative but not yet quantified.

Integrity is the behaviour and decisions that are consistently in line with your principles, and usually include ethics and honesty.

Leadership is the process of influencing people while operating to meet organisational requirements and improving the organisation through change.

Legitimacy is being given the right to hold a particular position, power or responsibility by a community or members of an organisation, being authorised under cultural and corporate laws, and being in accordance with established or accepted patterns and standards.

Mandate is the power granted by an electorate. It also means permission, consent or authorisation.

Mission statement describes the overall role of the organisation and it clearly identifies what the organisation does, and why and for whom it does it.

Motivation is the combination of a person's desire and energy directed at achieving a goal. It is the cause of action.

Negotiation is a discussion intended to produce a mutual agreement.

Nepotism is favouritism shown by somebody in power to their relatives and/or friends, especially appointing them to good positions.

Objectives are clear targets for specific action – precise, quantified, time-based statements of desired outcomes or accomplishments that must be realistic and attainable.

Organisational culture is the set of important assumptions, values, traditions and shared behaviours that members of an organisation share. It is a system of shared values about what is important and beliefs about how the organisation works. These directly influence the ways the organisation operates and therefore, its outcomes.

Participative leadership is a style of leadership in which the leader involves one or more employees in determining what to do and how to do it. The leader maintains final decision-making authority.

Performance standard is a criterion or benchmark against which actual performance is measured.

Planning is a course of action to accomplish goals – establishing priorities and allowing appropriate allocation of time and resources as well as proper assignment of people to achieve feasible, acceptable and suitable goals.

Representative is someone who serves as a delegate or agent on behalf of a community or members of a group.

Respect is the regard and recognition of the absolute dignity that every human being possesses. Respect is about compassion and consideration of others, which includes a sensitivity to and regard for the feelings and needs of others and an awareness of the effect of one's own behaviour on them. Respect also involves the notion of treating people justly.

Stacking is to arrange something underhandedly to ensure a desired outcome

Standard is an established norm against which measurements are compared – the time allowed to perform a task including the quality and quantity of work to be produced.

Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to your care.

Values are the ideas about the worth or importance of things, concepts and people.

Acknowledgements

Reconciliation Australia and BHP Billiton would like to thank all the organisations that applied for the Awards for the time and effort they put into their applications, and for the follow-up they provided in the creation of this resource.

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We particularly thank Wayne Quilliam for many of the photographs used in this publication.

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DVDs of the 2008 Finalists and of the Award Ceremony are available from Reconciliation Australia.

We especially acknowledge the work done by researchers from the Indigenous Community Governance Project at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at The Australian National University.

We also thank the members of the Awards Review Committee that was chaired by Mick Dodson – Janet Hunt and Eddie Cubillo.

Image: Waltja Tjutangu Palyapayi





Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2000 by the former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. We are the peak national organisation building and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation.

By working in partnership with other organisations across the Australian community, our overarching objective is to close the unacceptable gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. That the life of an Indigenous child born today is likely to end at least 11 years earlier than a non-Indigenous child's is not acceptable in an affluent country like ours.

All the varied work we do with our partners contributes to narrowing that gap.

BHP Billiton is the world's largest diversified resources company with businesses in over 25 countries around the world. In many of these we are hosted by Indigenous communities so we have a strong association with them. Working on land traditionally owned by Indigenous people means it is our responsibility to ensure their rights are respected.

Building relationships and partnerships is essential to our business, as it is for reconciliation. We are enormously proud of our partnership with Reconciliation Australia and the achievements of the Indigenous Governance Program in identifying and promoting Indigenous success.

The Indigenous Community Governance Project (ICGP) is a research partnership between the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at The Australian National University and Reconciliation Australia. The ICGP undertook research on Indigenous community governance with participating Indigenous communities and organisations across Australia in order to understand what works, what doesn't work and why. The research is practical and applied, and was intended to contribute to effective capacity development in Indigenous communities themselves, and among governments and others who work with them.

The research has been supported under the Australian Research Council's Linkage funding Scheme (Project No 0348744) and is also sponsored by the Northern Territory and Western Australian Governments and the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The Project has published overview research reports, papers and reports based on the individual community case studies. Further information can be found here www.anu.edu.au/caepr/ICGP_home.php and here <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/projects/indigenous-governance-research-project>.



Reconciliation Australia

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