Our 2017 Report

OUR NATIONAL VISION

Four years ago Indigenous Leaders from eight regions - remote, urban and regional - joined forces to drive a common reform agenda for Indigenous empowerment.

The eight regions are shown on the map opposite.

THEIR VISION IS STRAIGHTFORWARD:

“We want for our children the same opportunities and choices other Australians expect for their children. We want them to succeed in mainstream Australia, achieving educational success, prospering in the economy and living long, healthy lives. We want them to retain their cultures, languages and identities as Peoples and to be recognised as Indigenous Australians.”

Their aim is to shift the Indigenous affairs paradigm from passive welfare and Government overreach to empowerment of Indigenous families and individuals. They have designed a model that will tip the power balance between Indigenous People and Government, making Government work with and for Indigenous people to close social and economic disparity, and ensure that identities, languages and cultures are not lost.

A commitment to the goal of development - development that fosters empowerment - is central, supported by getting greater value and productivity from critical investment in Indigenous affairs.

This requires successfully connecting and cementing the work of Indigenous People locally in regions with supportive structural changes to Government systems.

The national case for change

PRIORITY FOR EMPowerMENT

Indigenous People:

1. Participate in education & learning with parents involved
   Proportion of children attending school 90% or more
   - Indigenous: 49%
   - Non-Indigenous: 79.3%

2. Care for children and other vulnerable people
   Indigenous children are twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than Non-Indigenous children
   - 2:1

3. Participate in work or training
   Labour force participation rate
   - Indigenous: 55.9%
   - Non-Indigenous: 76.4%

   Unemployment rate
   - 17.2% Indigenous
   - 5% Non-Indigenous

4. Have stable housing and aspire to home ownership
   Proportion of homes that are owned outright or with a mortgage
   - Indigenous: 37.4%
   - Non-Indigenous: 69.6%

5. Live in safe communities with rights respected under the law and the community’s values
   Indigenous people are over hospitalised for assault than
   - 13x more likely to be non-Indigenous people

It has to be done in a way that enables building capability, self-reliance, aspiration, opportunity and increased choice - that puts Indigenous People in the driver’s seat, with responsibility and decision making for their lives and development resting with them. While the EC vision is shared, the specific pathway to empowerment varies across regions to suit local circumstances.

Those who spearhead this movement have led reform in their own regions over many years. They now stand together, convinced that with the power of their collaboration they can shift the balance to Indigenous empowerment. It’s a ten year journey they are making with Governments and corporate Australia (through Jawun) as crucial partners.
Our regional vision

The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Lands span the tri-state central desert region of Australia, covering 350,000 square kilometres and encompassing 26 remote communities and homelands. NPY is the only Empowered Communities (EC) region covering more than one State jurisdiction (NT, SA and WA communities). Despite concerted efforts towards positive change, Agangu and Yarnangu (Aboriginal People of the NPY region) continue to face high levels of social and economic disadvantage.

Indigenous Population 5,276
Overall Population 7,218
Remote Communities & Homelands 26

In all languages of the NPY region, Nyawa means “together we are looking ahead towards a new future”. The EC vision is to increase the capacity of Agangu people to lead healthy and meaningful lives in safe and positive communities, with improved life choices, while maintaining culture and language.

Our development focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment priority</th>
<th>Local priorities</th>
<th>Community tells us</th>
<th>Data tells us</th>
<th>We don’t yet know</th>
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<td>Indigenous People:</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Participate in education &amp; learning with parents involved</td>
<td>Uvankaraku ninti nyirnanytjaku (good education)</td>
<td>Agangu talk consistently about:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The value of work and opportunities for jobs or meaningful engagement</td>
<td>Data for the NPY region indicates it is one of the most financially and socially disadvantaged in Australia.</td>
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<td>• Needing to strengthen communities and have more control over what happens</td>
<td>Education, health, housing and employment consistently fall below other Indigenous regions and far below national and/or Non-Indigenous outcomes.</td>
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<td>• The gradual erosion of influence over what happens to them, their families, their communities and their lands and the need to fix that</td>
<td>Year 12 attainment or equivalent for 20-24 year olds:</td>
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<td>Data tells us</td>
<td>NPY Lands 16%</td>
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<td>National Indigenous rate 53.9%</td>
<td>National Non-Indigenous rate 86%</td>
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<td>17-24 year olds not participating in work or study:</td>
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<td>NPY Lands 91%</td>
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<td>National Indigenous rate 61%</td>
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<td>National Non-Indigenous rate 26%</td>
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<td>Hospitalisation rate for per 1000:</td>
<td>Hospitalisation rate for per 1000:</td>
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<td>NPY Lands 13.9</td>
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<td>National Indigenous rate 0.7</td>
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<td>National Non-Indigenous rate 0.7</td>
<td>National Non-Indigenous rate 0.7</td>
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Care for children & other vulnerable people

Participate in work or training

Have stable housing & aspire to home ownership

Live in safe communities with rights respected under the law & the community’s values

Our pathway of empowerment

Empowered Communities (EC) is grounded in the voice of Indigenous People. Community empowerment begins with people identifying what’s working, what’s not and what changes are needed to make communities stronger.

Consequently, our First Priority was to engage all the communities in the NPY region, meeting with Agangu at their invitation. Conversations with Local Leaders across the region resulted in invitations to hold broader meetings in all 26 communities.

The Backbone Team is now near the end of the first round of listening to people voicing their hopes, concerns and ideas for change. Information shared to date has been captured as the foundations for a regional perspective. Several strong themes are emerging that complement the 5 EC focus areas.

These themes are:

- An increase in governance, support and training at a community level which will contribute to better understanding of local issues and stronger decision making processes
- Regional approaches to developing future leadership and
- Maintaining and strengthening a strong cultural foundation within all future initiatives.

Supplemented by regional data that highlights the significant social and economic challenges, there is a shared view that a focus on financial and social prosperity will underpin our unfolding Regional Development Agenda.

Our Journey So Far

Sept 2013
NPY Women’s Council (NPYWC) assumed the lead for community & stakeholder engagement

Feb 2014
NPY Region EC Taskforce formed

Feb 2015
Potential Opt In Organisations meet & formed an interim Regional Steering Committee (iRSC) with eight Indigenous Partner Organisations

May 2015
NPYWC designated as the Backbone Organisation to form & auspice the NPY EC Backbone Team

2016
Empowered Communities funding received

2016-17
Establishment of the Backbone recruitment of Team & commencement of community engagement activities

1 The term Agangu has been used in this report to refer collectively to those groups.
What we’ve done so far

The focus of NPY EC has been on establishing strong and collaborative relationships with Anangu communities, our Steering Committee Partners, PM&C staff and other stakeholders.

The Backbone Team have travelled vast distances across NT, SA and WA to carry out community consultations to foster engagement and participation of Anangu and to ensure their priorities have been heard. Overcoming extensive challenges around logistics, costs and language barriers has been rewarded by positive relationships, contributing to a rich source of information and guiding the first priorities for EC in this region.

The Backbone Team has established a strong collaborative relationship with PM&C which has contributed to increased overall dialogue and improved information sharing between the PM&C SA, WA and NT offices. Additionally, through the interim Regional Steering Committee (iRSC) and Financial Security Working Group there is a productive environment of collaboration, advocacy and momentum for collective and aligned action.

In response to the community engagement and consultations to date, the NPY EC Backbone Team are undertaking work around the following priority areas:

1. Strengthening community governance
2. Relationships and collaboration across borders
3. Advocacy and action research into financial security
4. Positive futures for young people

How we are working together

Community meetings are an integral component of EC engagement across the region and will continue. Consideration is continuously given to the most appropriate and sustainable way to ensure effective, long term Anangu engagement with, participation in and ownership of EC. Plans are underway for a Regional Emerging Leaders Program facilitated by EC.

The NPY EC iRSC comprises seven Aboriginal controlled organisations: NPY Women’s Council, Western Desert Dialysis, Regional Agangu Services Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC), Ngaanyatjarra Council, Ngaanyatjarra Health Service, Mai Waru Stores Council and Central Land Council (CLC). Two partners, Western Desert Dialysis & Mai Wiru Stores, work across State or Territory borders. NPYWC is the only partner currently operating throughout the Tri-State Region. The Committee has been set up as an interim body on the basis that it is expected leadership and governance will evolve over time as the Regional Development Agenda is set.

A meeting of Anangu directors of these organisations occurred in March this year in Wingellina, with two more scheduled for 2017. Regular meetings and information sharing occur between the iRSC, the EC Backbone Team and PMC personnel in the three jurisdictions and work is now underway to strengthen relationships with State and Territory Governments (NT, SA & WA).

What’s on the horizon

Establishing first priority projects and consolidating relationships

A critical foundation for identifying first priorities is building solid relationships and a shared commitment to collaborative decision making at all levels. In order to achieve this, an immediate priority for the Backbone Team is completing engagement and consultation through visits to the Ngaanyatjarra communities (WA).

An additional focus is on identifying an appropriate model for Partner Opt In Organisations, strengthening ownership of EC by their Anangu Directors and alternative support and engagement models for key regional organisations. In doing this, efforts are being made to improve information sharing between all stakeholders, including connecting with State and Territory Governments and additional Commonwealth Departments.

These approaches will facilitate the creation of a robust and representative Regional Development Agenda.

Where we are up to

NPYWC CEO Andrea Mason has been a strong advocate for the EC model. She has made a substantial contribution to the original design of the EC Initiative, leading to its approval and current operational phase with strong input from the Regional Partner Organisations.

Key achievements

• Backbone Team established & staffed
• A strong foundation for collaboration & decision making
• Collaboration with & between PM&C offices
• Increasing awareness of EC amongst Anangu communities
• Awareness of EC amongst service providers and stakeholders

Now

Staff are progressing engagement at community, service provider & Government levels

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See overleaf for change case studies

Decision making/empowerment
Relationships & collaboration
Working differently
Skills for change
Where we are starting to see positive change

CASE STUDY 1

Decision making and empowerment through community consultation

EC partners in the NPY region have been clear about the necessity for rigorous and appropriate community engagement.

Establishing awareness, support and momentum in the NPY region is challenged by working with 26 communities across 3 jurisdictions, each with different systems of local governance. In order to overcome these challenges the Backbone Team have:

1. Sought permission from Regional Councils in each State/Territory to speak to individual Community Representative Councils
2. Engaged Community Councils in all 26 communities to request permission to hold whole-of-community meetings and
3. Held community meetings to seek people’s support and identify issues of importance to the community (incorporating separate men’s and women’s conversation spaces).

While this process is providing a representative view of issues and priorities, our challenge is to sustain ongoing engagement in this vast and diverse region.

“Organisations now have better relationships and are able to share information and advice”
EC participant completing local feedback survey

“Beginning the journey on a new path”
EC participant completing local feedback survey

This broader focus was guided by stories emerging from communities regarding the pressure, tension and financial hardship people were experiencing as a result of individual income and debt issues. Data from the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and NT, SA and WA Housing Departments has been requested to help understand and test this anecdotal evidence. While it is recognised that a range of factors contribute to poverty, compelling stories of individual and family stress, together with case studies from service providers contributed to the evidence base for NPY EC’s submission to the recent CDP Senate Inquiry.

Ongoing work will be undertaken to understand the challenges that community members are facing and opportunities to work with community members to help address them.

CASE STUDY 2

Relationships & collaboration across borders

Where we started: Collaboration & shared decision making pre-EC

INDEPENDENT COLLABORATIVE

Across Opt Ins

Government with Opt Ins

Where we are now: Emerging changes in how we are working:

Across Opt Ins

Government with Opt Ins

Within Government

Between layers of Government

Collaboration across State and Territory lines is a unique and essential element to the delivery of EC in the NPY region. Bringing together PM&C Regional Managers and their staff from WA, NT and SA jurisdictions has been a key achievement of NPY EC to date. The Backbone Team are holding fortnightly meetings with PM&C staff from the tri-state region to discuss common issues pertaining to the roll out of EC.

Through this, and the establishment of the Financial Security Working Group, data sharing and information exchange has improved. Whilst there is still progress to be made, the increase in collaboration across jurisdictions will ultimately lead to better prioritisation of investment and service delivery more responsive to local circumstances.

CASE STUDY 3

Working differently – Financial Security Working Group

In mid-2016 a Community Development Program (CDP) Working Group was established to address issues pertaining to CDP. In recognition that CDP was not the only issue impacting on financial security in remote communities, the Group made up of Partner Organisations, RASAC, CLC, NPYWC, Mai Waru, Ngaanyatjarra Council and Government, agreed a broader focus and changed its name to the NPY Regional Financial Security Working Group.

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CASE STUDY 4

Skills for change: Positive futures for young people

Emerging as a priority from consultations is the need to support positive futures for young people including transition into training, employment and leadership.

In order to adhere to this guidance by Agangu, a number of activities have emerged:

- The documentation of existing research and recommendations relating to transition support for school leavers
- Consultations with local leaders to scope out a regional leadership program
- The Jawun Emerging Leaders Program meeting with NPY Young & Emerging Leaders to shape ideas for a regional leadership program
- PM&C NT and SA organised multiagency forums to seek commitment to cross-agency collaboration to support better employment and education outcomes

Photo: NPY Emerging Leaders meeting, June 2017

Disclaimer: Empowered Communities is a long term process of change. The information contained in these reports is a snap shot in time based on data collected in the first 12 months of implementation. As EC evolves and more Indigenous people and communities become involved, so will the story of change in each Region. To become involved, please contact the Backbone organisation in your Region.