



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.

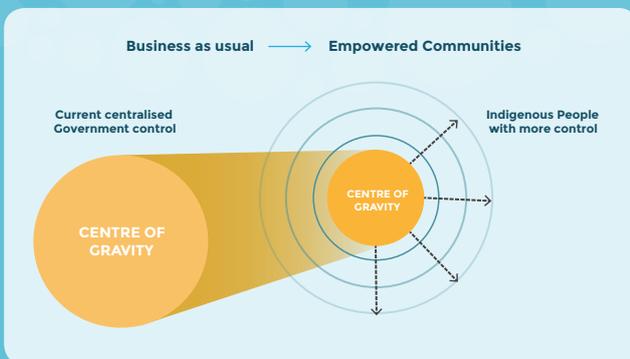
THEIR VISION IS STRAIGHTFORWARD:

"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.



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.



The national case for change

PRIORITIES FOR EMPOWERMENT

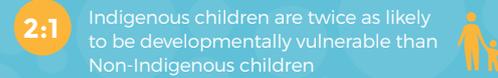
Indigenous People:

- 1 **Participate** in education & learning with parents involved

Proportion of children attending school 90% or more



- 2 **Care** for children and other vulnerable people



- 3 **Participate** in work or training

Labour force participation rate

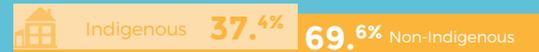


Unemployment rate



- 4 **Have stable housing** and aspire to home ownership

Proportion of homes that are owned outright or with a mortgage



- 5 **Live in safe communities** with rights respected under the law and the community's values



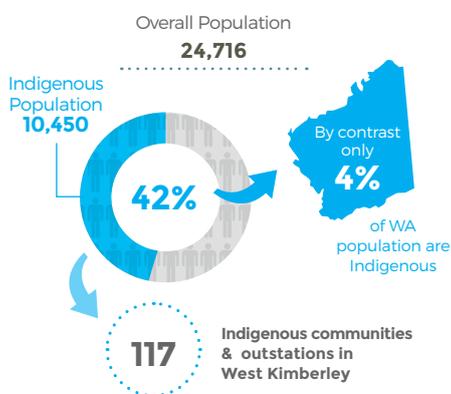
Those who spearhead this movement have led reform in their own regions over many years. They now stand together, convinced that with the power of their collaboration they can shift the balance to Indigenous empowerment. It's a ten year journey they are making with Governments and corporate Australia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

Our regional vision

Empowered Communities (EC) is a new name on a long term effort by Kimberley Aboriginal people to shape their own destiny.

Our vision is to have a thriving and sustainable values-based Aboriginal cultural foundation from which we:

- Build our Aboriginal enterprises
- Offer choices for our people to take up employment
- Create wealth, health and wellbeing for our community and
- Achieve positive social reform across the region.



Our pathway of empowerment

The West Kimberley's approach has been firstly to learn from the past and then to listen, inform, engage and seek direction from a wide variety of Kimberley Aboriginal Leaders.

Leaders we have sought out have included those from highly respected representative organisations, people in positions of influence, family and community leaders and those who have sought out EC in the West Kimberley because of a strong alignment with the EC' approach and a desire to build on existing Aboriginal strength.

The two First Priorities coming from our consultations are focused on children and young people



Fostering Generation Change

The Kimberley Aboriginal Young Leaders Committee was established early in EC. Initial youth members were selected as role models who demonstrated positive social norms (i.e. in work and/or study, care for family and children, respectful of Aboriginal culture and heritage, look after their home.) The Committee designed and sourced funding for a Young Leader Program and are in the early stages of designing a related Development Agenda that will foster generational change.



Reducing Children in Care

The Kimberley Aboriginal Children in Care Committee was established early in EC to address the over representation of Kimberley Aboriginal Children in State Care. Together with WA Government they have developed ground breaking policy proposals which are influencing how future policy is designed and implemented. Early work on a related long term Development Agenda is well underway.

Our development focus

Empowerment priority	Our objectives	Community tells us	Data tells us	We don't yet know
Indigenous People: 1 Participate in education & learning with parents involved 2 Care for children & other vulnerable people 3 Participate in work or training 4 Have stable housing and aspire to home ownership 5 Live in safe communities with rights respected under the law & the community's values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture is strong, celebrated & maintained • Children & the vulnerable are cared for & safe • Build upon the existing strength, success & innovation of young people within their communities to promote & foster generational change • Build capacities of individuals, families & communities to take on economic development opportunities & meaningful employment • Develop local economies to create wealth & generate employment 	Consistently about their: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopes, dreams and concerns for children and young people's current and future prospects • A desire to participate in the modern economy while maintaining and sustaining connection and respect for country, culture and heritage. 	There is an over representation of Aboriginal children in State care in the Kimberley region. About 99% of children in WA State Care in the West Kimberley are Aboriginal while constituting 54% of the child population. There are untapped opportunities for remote communities to create wealth and earn income through economic participation and enterprise development. Indigenous labour force participation and employment rates are low at 48.3% and 33.2% . Given that 42% of people are Indigenous, development of local economies and increased capacities will result in higher labour force participation and employment for Indigenous people.	More work is required to identify impact measures to identify positive change in communities. Data we have yet to uncover includes localised data that provides indication of connection to culture and country, family and community wellbeing, social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, growth in leadership of young people in their communities, value of local economic activities and wealth creation in the West Kimberley.

Our Journey So Far



What we've done so far

Aarnja had, to some extent, already positioned itself as a backbone organisation prior to receiving EC funds, so when the funds were received it was well positioned to recruit and establish full backbone operations.

Existing governance structures, such as the Kimberley Futures Forum, were enhanced and used to guide early EC set up and consultations and sharpen the focus for the First Priorities. Working Groups were formed to progress the two main First Priority areas. Those Groups were endorsed by Kimberley Futures and other local governing forums, to which they report their progress.

Key progress points

- Backbone established and fully operational
- West Kimberley Leadership Group commenced
- Kimberley Aboriginal Young Leadership Program established
- Kimberley Youth Suicide Prevention Forum facilitated
- Kimberley Aboriginal Children in Care Committee Forums in Broome, Halls Creek, Derby & Wyndham facilitated

In addition to the above First Priority areas, EC has also worked to support a range of other local initiatives. For example, communities in the Dampier Peninsula were some of the first to opt in to EC. Working collaboratively, those communities have strategically engaged EC in the Road Bitumisation Project which will more effectively connect them to a regional centre of Broome, opening up increased industry such as in construction, tourism, and food production.

"(We are) getting better at identifying common areas / concerns / issues."

EC participant completing local feedback survey

What are the changes we are starting to see...



- Decision making/empowerment
- Relationships & collaboration
- Working differently
- Skills for change

CHANGE CASE STUDIES

How we are working together

Aarnja is now a well established independent backbone organisation.

It has two Independent Directors and 10 Aboriginal Directors elected by members from across the Kimberley.

The Aarnja Board strategically directs backbone functions, ensuring neutrality and independence is maintained. Aarnja's skill and capability in leading professional collaboration and facilitation are well recognised by Aboriginal People and Governments alike.

Regional priorities are set by the West Kimberley EC Leadership Group (WKECLG). All members are Kimberley Aboriginal people nominated and endorsed by the Kimberley Futures Forum.

Each leader brings considerable experience and knowledge of what works and what doesn't and, while all hold important roles in other organisations, their role is not to represent any organisation, rather it is to use their experience and knowledge to guide strategy that will improve the lives for all Aboriginal people in the West Kimberley.

A number of Working Groups and Committees have formed in specific topic areas, such as the Children in Care Committee, as well as place-based Committees to focus on a community or sub-region of the West Kimberley, such as the Dampier Peninsular Road Working Group. These structures and membership are agile and adaptive in order to respond to changing circumstances and needs.

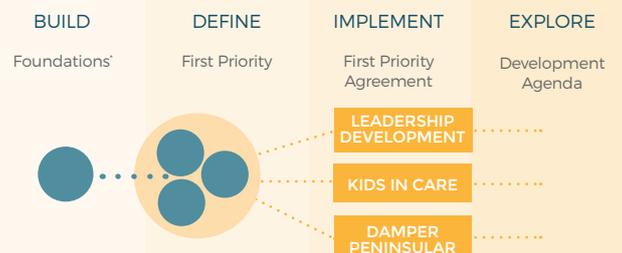
What's on the horizon

The First Priorities around Fostering Generational Change and Reducing Aboriginal Children In Care have moved beyond being short term demonstration projects.

Longer term 5+ year Development Agendas are now required in each area to ensure sustainable progress and build capability. Those Agendas are being developed.

There are also new and emerging opportunities for Aboriginal people to develop sustainable industries that support economic development and reduce long term reliance on Government funding. This is the next major focus for us.

Where we are up to



Feb 2017

West Kimberley EC Leadership Group established



May 2017

Kimberley Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Forum conducted



June 2017

Dampier Peninsula Road Working Group established





Where we are starting to see positive change

CASE STUDY 1

Fostering Generational Change

The Kimberley Aboriginal Young Leadership Program (KAYLP) was designed by a group of inspiring young Kimberley Aboriginal people.

The Program was delivered by Broome based Aboriginal corporation Coolarri Media Enterprises with funding support from the WA Government's Royalties for Regions. 17 young Aboriginal participants with interest and potential in becoming a 'leader' undertook the Program in its first year.

The Program is designed to accelerate the leadership development of participants by building critical leadership capabilities in modern society with strong cultural guidance and protection. 2016 KAYLP was evaluated by Charles Darwin University and found to be a successful and culturally relevant program.

"Young people, including some previous participants, are now shaping the planning and implementation of 2017 KAYLP. They are also taking on leadership roles in their communities and workplaces and organising themselves to form Youth Action Committees in their own communities.

"We have to hope, not despair - we have the solutions."

June Oscar AO, West Kimberley Aboriginal leader

CASE STUDY 2

Relationships & collaboration

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



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

- Across Opt Ins 
- Government with Opt Ins 
- Within Government 
- Between layers of Government 

We are starting to see changes in how local organisations and Government are working together.

"The organisations in the community are collaborating more closely for better outcomes. Relationships between organisations are growing and becoming stronger." "Local champions are providing direction to the community. Improved understanding of community issues and changes (are) coming through." That is translating into "more grassroots level changes". "Starting to see more engagement from the Commonwealth government. The Minister for Indigenous Affairs listening more." (EC participants completing local feedback survey)

CASE STUDY 3

Reducing the over representation of Aboriginal Children in State Care

West Kimberley Aboriginal People involved in EC identified children in out-of-home care as a First Priority for their region. Rates of out-of-home care in the Kimberley are significantly higher for Aboriginal children than their non-Aboriginal peers. Aboriginal Leaders established the Kimberley Aboriginal Children in Care Committee, which has worked with Aarnja, to address this important priority. The Committee provided a report identifying key issues and gaps in the child protection system, as well as next steps to address the gaps. The Report identified the need to: consult with Aboriginal organisations and communities; provide prevention and early intervention services; support parents of children at risk or in placement; support Aboriginal carers to become foster parents and assist with developing and implementing care plans; and assess children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

The Committee continues to work closely with the responsible WA Government Department to ensure current and future legislative, policy and service reviews take these recommendation into account.

"Sometimes we can be our own worst enemy. Lateral violence is a real danger; what we really need is lateral love!"

Janine Dureau, Aarnja CEO

CASE STUDY 4

Dampier Peninsula Road

The Federal and State Government have committed \$65 million to seal the remaining 90km of an unsealed section of road connecting Dampier Peninsula communities to the regional centre of Broome.

Since then, EC has worked with community leaders and Aboriginal representative organisations who have arranged their own collaborative local governance mechanisms. This has given them the ability to negotiate effectively with multiple WA State and Commonwealth Government Agencies to ensure there is a strong focus on community development as well as on infrastructure and economic development.

"Communities (are) talking to each other more on issues that impacts on all communities in (Dampier Peninsula, DP) e.g. the airstrip, sealing of the DP road."