

# **Maps to Success**

## **Successful strategies in Indigenous organisations**

**The Australian Collaboration**

**Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Studies**

Text-only Web version

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This handbook has been prepared for the Australian Collaboration by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies.

It is based on research carried out by Dr Julie Finlayson (principal researcher for the main study) and Ms Joanna Lunzer, and research on jointly managed protected areas by Ms Toni Bauman and Dr Dermot Smyth.

## **LIST OF SPONSORS**

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- > The Poola Foundation (Tom Kantor Fund)
- > Reconciliation Australia

The Australian Collaboration is a consortium of seven leading national community organisations:

- > Australian Council of Social Services
- > Australian Conservation Foundation
- > Australian Council for International Development
- > Choice (Australian Consumers Association)
- > Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- > National Council of Churches in Australia
- > Trust for Young Australians

Thanks to all the Indigenous organisations, community groups and other agencies that have contributed to the case studies on which this report is based.

This is a text-only Web version of the Report, produced to improve downloading for sites without access to good-quality broadband. Copies of the original report as printed can be obtained from AIATSIS or the Australian Collaboration.

## **INTENT OF THE STUDY**

The Australian Collaboration, a consortium of seven leading national community organisations, proposed that a national study be carried out into initiatives in local indigenous organisations that have helped to promote community wellbeing or to overcome disadvantage. The aim of the study was to identify the lessons that might be learnt from these successes.

The Australian Collaboration invited the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to carry out the research. A steering committee was formed with representation from these two organisations and funding bodies. Professor Larissa Behrendt, Professor of Law and Indigenous Studies, University of Technology Sydney, was invited to chair the committee.

The partner organisations agreed that an essential requirement for the study was that its findings should be of practical use to Indigenous communities as a source of ideas and an inspiration for adoption and adaptation. The study should also be a guide to best practice for government and non-government organisations and for philanthropic, corporate and public sector engagement. It should draw out succinct lessons and suggest ways of communicating and discussing the findings of the study.

To meet these objectives two publications have been prepared. One is this handbook for Indigenous organisations (volume 2). The other publication (volume 1) is designed for policy makers. Both publications rely on primary research in thirteen case studies on Indigenous organisations by Dr Julie Finlayson and Ms Joanna Lunzer, and three on jointly managed protected areas by Ms Toni Bauman and Dr Dermot Smyth. Reading through these case studies is inspiring because of the amount of energy and determination put in by the people working in the organisations and the sheer hard work required keeping the enterprises going.

## HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

Indigenous communities can use this handbook as a practical source of ideas and an inspiration for adoption and adaptation.

Information is organised in this handbook as a tour through a typical organisation, starting at the front door and moving through the different areas or rooms. Readers can go directly to their main area of interest, such as the accounts department, read straight through or browse. The plans do not represent any particular organisation.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to any issue. In fact, many organisations have found different solutions to the same problems. The road to success is always under construction.

At the end of the *Organising for Success: Policy Report* there are brief snapshots of the participating organisations. To improve download time, for this text only version, the list is not repeated.

## **PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS**

Awabakal Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd (Awabakal)

*Wickham (Newcastle), New South Wales*

The Co-operative provides a range of community services including: Aboriginal Medical Service, elders and disability services, preschool and day care centre.

Bama Ngappi Ngappi Aboriginal Corporation (Bama Ngappi Ngappi)

*Yarrabah (near Cairns), North Queensland*

The Corporation provides employment services under the trading name EmployNet at Yarrabah, Cairns, Townsville, Atherton and Mt Isa. It also runs CDEP at Yarrabah.

Booderee National Park (Booderee)

*Jervis Bay Territory, southeastern Australia*

A joint management arrangement for a National Park and Botanic Gardens. The land is owned by Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council and leased to the Directorate of National Parks. The management area includes both terrestrial and marine areas.

Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Brambuk)

*Halls Gap (Grampians-Gariwerd National Park), Victoria*

The centre runs educational and cultural tourism activities and a backpacker hostel.

Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation (Dhimurru)

*Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory*

Dhimurru is responsible for the management of the Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area, which includes both terrestrial and marine areas.

Durri Medical Service (Durri)

*Kempsey, New South Wales*

The Service provides medical and health services for the Indigenous population of the region.

Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation Ltd (Murdi Paaki)

*Coonamble, New South Wales*

The Corporation manages CDEPs across central and western NSW, and runs employment, training and business development initiatives.

Nitmiluk National Park (Nitmiluk)

*Katherine Gorge, Northern Territory*

A joint management arrangement for a National Park. The land is owned by Traditional Owners, and has been leased to the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission.

Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd (Papunya Tula)

*Alice Springs, Northern Territory*

The company runs a commercial art enterprise owned and directed by artists of the Western Desert.

Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd (Rumbalara)

*Mooroopna (near Shepparton), Victoria*

The Co-operative provides a range of community services including: health services, aged care and disability services, housing and family services.

South West Aboriginal Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation (SWAMS)

*Bunbury, southwest Western Australia*

An Aboriginal Medical Service for residents of southwest WA.

Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council (Tweed Byron)

*Chinderah (Tweed region), northeast New South Wales*

A Land Council responsible for representing members within the shires of Byron and Tweed under the (NSW) Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 and providing land management services and housing.

Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency Co-operative Ltd (VACCA)

*Melbourne, Victoria*

The Co-operative is a state-wide lead agency representing Aboriginal interests in all policy, program and services associated with the welfare of Aboriginal children and families.

Wangka Maya Language Centre (Wangka Maya)

*Pilbara, Western Australia*

The Centre provides language services, translation and studies regional languages.

Worn Gundidj Co-operative (Worn Gundidj)

*Warrnambool, southwest Victoria*

The Co-operative runs a CDEP and cultural tourism enterprise.

Wunan Foundation Incorporated (Wunan)

*Kununurra (East Kimberley), Western Australia*

An economic development Foundation providing employment and training related services and business and corporate services. It is also involved with running tourism services and a hostel.



## 1 FRONT DOOR (WAITING AREA, RECEPTION)

All staff on reception need comprehensive training about the organisation. They might have to field and direct questions about anything so they need to know where to go for what. They need to know the names and whereabouts of all staff.

### PRESENTATION

The entrance to the organisation is its face. Give careful consideration to clear signage including directions, as well as landscaping and pathways for access. A cheery, welcoming entrance that gives a clean, efficient feel can create goodwill on the way in.

Reception needs to be:

- > Clean, neat and uncluttered;
- > Comfortable in case people need to wait;
- > Accessible to the elderly and disabled.

**REAL LIFE:** Bama Ngappi Ngappi Townsville office has been painted in bright colours to add to the friendly, relaxed atmosphere. Staff greet their clients with a warm smile and wear casual but tidy clothes. One staff member compared this with another Townsville employment office where staff must wear scarves and stockings. Clients have commented that they feel much more comfortable in the more welcoming environment at Bama Ngappi Ngappi.

### INFORMATION AND FEEDBACK

Information can be available in many forms:

- > Wall posters;
- > Displays;
- > Leaflets and brochures;
- > Newsletters;
- > Local directories, such as the Chamber of Commerce directory;
- > Audiovisuals.

**REAL LIFE:** Murdi Paaki has regular communication with clients, stakeholders and partners through monthly newsletters, media releases, and a website. The tone of the newsletters is celebratory, valuing the achievements of project participants in communities, and staff working for the organisation.

**REAL LIFE:** At Awabakal, a monthly newsletter, *Healthy Vibes* is developed in partnership with Hunter-New England Health and is made available to all members. The publication covers program updates, an events calendar, recipes, updates on community groups such as sporting teams, contact details for programs mentioned, an Awabakal member profile, and other features such as an Aboriginal history section.

**REAL LIFE:** Wangka Maya has a monthly spot on local Aboriginal community radio which reaches many clients who have poor literacy levels.

Feedback questionnaires can be placed at reception with boxes for return. They are useful for recording and presenting information back to clients and funding bodies if the results are systematically collated.

Place suggestion boxes prominently and follow up complaints and ideas. Wall displays of suggestions with feedback show a willingness to listen and to act on ideas.

Reception also provides an opportunity for small-scale merchandising via bookshelves or counter displays. The products can be from the enterprise itself or from other Indigenous suppliers.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Communications**

- > *Making Reader Friendly Publications: How to produce newsletters, leaflets and manuals that people will want to read*, Social Change Media website. A practical guide to producing newsletters, leaflets and manuals.  
[http://media.socialchange.net.au/reader\\_friendly/](http://media.socialchange.net.au/reader_friendly/)
- > *Marketing, Media and Post Centre*, Our Community website. Provides resources and tools to improve communications, building greater public awareness and support.  
[http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\\_main.jsp](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_main.jsp)
- > *The How-To of Communications Planning: Ten Essential Steps*. Social Change Media website. Outlines ten simple steps to assist in planning communications more strategically. [http://media.socialchange.net.au/planning\\_comms/10steps.html](http://media.socialchange.net.au/planning_comms/10steps.html)

### **Participatory planning processes and feedback**

- > *Planning for Country, Cross-cultural approaches to decision-making on Aboriginal lands*, Fiona Walsh and Paul Mitchell (eds), Jukurrpa Books, Alice Springs 2002.

## 2 MANAGER OR CEO'S OFFICE

'There is the false perception that all you need is legitimacy as a leader to be a good CEO'  
*Senior manager, SWAMS*

### LEADERSHIP

The Chief Executive officer's (CEO) ability is crucial for success. The spirit of a CEO will permeate the whole organisation in time. Most of the organisations in the study demonstrate outstanding leadership, a vital factor. A number of CEOs cited 'leading by example' as important.

**REAL LIFE:** The CEO at Awabakal had learnt from his work in real estate that you 'never made money sitting in an office'. Similarly, his real estate experience has taught him 'how to get the best deal' and he lobbied hard for new initiatives with government. Over the years he has built strong community networks and contacts across different groups in the region, particularly through his involvement in sports. He says he maintains an open door policy in the conduct of the organisation's daily administration and makes a point of encouraging community members to drop in.

**REAL LIFE:** At Papunya Tula, field workers spoke of their manager's unwavering support, explaining that he makes himself available to them to ask questions or seek guidance, at all times. They feel supported in their role despite working mostly independently and at great distances from management based in Alice Springs

### LEADERSHIP FROM BEHIND

While strong and clear leadership from the CEO and senior managers will benefit the organisation, leadership from behind is also important. Part of the leader's function is to allow others to share power and contribute ideas. It is also part of their function to look both inside and outside the enterprise.

**REAL LIFE:** At SWAMS and Worn Gundidj, the CEOs attend meetings of industry-wide organisations to give them perspective on how others are faring in similar enterprises, both for benchmarking and fresh ideas.

**REAL LIFE:** In December 2006, a new partnership between Murdi Paaki and Broken Hill City Council saw the creation of six new Indigenous Community Services Traineeship positions within the City: at the Art Gallery; GeoCentre; Youth Centre; Library; Visitors Information Centre; and the Living Desert. Project partners also include Sureway, Western Institute of TAFE and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

**REAL LIFE:** At Durri, the three senior management staff are the CEO, the office manager and the program manager. They are multi-skilled to the extent that they can fill the role of their colleagues in an emergency. This is one way of dealing with the issue of an organisation depending too much on key individuals.

**REAL LIFE:** Worn Gundidj displays high energy levels; enthusiasm and passion are the hallmarks of the services at Tower Hill. The drive in the CDEP and its activities is associated with the leadership of the senior managers and their focus and vision. This is openly demonstrated by those leading from the top, but is also evident in less obvious approaches where managers lead from behind.

## **LEADERSHIP STYLES**

Different leadership styles are needed for different organisational phases. In setting up an enterprise, the CEO may need to be more directive; as the organisation matures a more collaborative style may develop.

**REAL LIFE:** At SWAMS, an outsider who was very action focused was brought in to 'shake up' the organisation. For the consolidation of the changes, a softer management style was needed.

**REAL LIFE:** At Bama Ngappi Ngappi, some management matters have been tightened (e.g. control of assets through an assets register) while others have been outsourced, like human resources, information technology, vehicles fleet management and payroll, to allow staff to concentrate on core business.

## **TRUST**

The relationship between the CEO and the Board is crucial, and trust is an essential element. Respect for the CEO is essential as well, and is usually based on performance.

**REAL LIFE:** At Murdi Paaki, the CEO has to travel long distances and work long hours checking progress and 'putting out spot fires'. Her persistence is crucial to the success of the organisation.

## **CHANGE**

Even with an ideal and longstanding CEO, consideration needs to be given to succession planning. No one stays forever and this is a risk that an enterprise may collapse when a key individual leaves.

Coping with change is a major challenge for all of the organisations studied as government policies and programs change, new circumstances arise and the enterprise develops.

**REAL LIFE:** SWAMS had to undergo rapid ‘top-down’ change management to challenge organisational complacency and to convince the funding body that it could embrace reform. The executive managed the situation while keeping the organisation afloat in a process described as ‘unfreezing, shaking up and refreezing’.

**REAL LIFE:** At Worn Gundidj, the senior management is lateral thinking and has what is called in the management literature ‘a learning organisational culture’. Management engages with change, seeks innovation and is not afraid to experiment.

**REAL LIFE:** Maintaining neutrality and ‘working across families’ can be a challenge. At SWAMS, the CEO effectively deals with this challenge by carefully managing kinship relationships to avoid their intrusion into the workplace. If clients refer to her as ‘Aunty’ in the workplace, she draws the distinction that she is ‘Glenda at work and Aunty outside of work’.

## **WHAT DO WE DO IF**

### **... the organisation does not have a succession plan?**

- > Identify program managers or staff with the necessary qualities and who are committed to the enterprise;
- > Organise training and further education for potential future CEOs;
- > Incorporate succession planning into the strategic plan.

### **...evidence of staff misconduct appears, like misuse of staff vehicles or mobile phones?**

- > Management will need to confront such behaviour immediately.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Change**

- > Kurt Lewin’s *Change Theory in the Field and in the Classroom: Notes Toward a Model of Managed Learning*, article by Edgar H. Schein, Society for Organizational Learning website, discusses the influence of Lewin’s change theory on contemporary organisation development work. [www.solonline.org/res/wp/10006.html](http://www.solonline.org/res/wp/10006.html)

### **Leadership**

- > Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre. A national organisation providing accredited leadership courses to Indigenous Australians. [www.Indigenousleadership.org.au](http://www.Indigenousleadership.org.au)
- > Community Leadership Centre, Our Community website. Resources to help community leaders enhance their skills. [www.ourcommunity.com.au/leadership](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/leadership)

## **Management**

- > *Free Management Library*: a complete integrated online library for non-profits and for-profits. the online library provides access to a comprehensive range of management resources covering 650 topics. [www.managementhelp.org](http://www.managementhelp.org)
- > *Management Support Online*: Training, Resources, advice for Community Organisations in Governance, Management, Operations. A web-based set of services and resources designed to assist community sector organisations. [www.managementsupportonline.com.au](http://www.managementsupportonline.com.au)
- > Management Support Unit, Council of Social Service of NSW. Established to assist non-government organisations in best practice in management and governance. [www.ncoss.org.au/msu](http://www.ncoss.org.au/msu)

## **Mediation and facilitation by management**

- > The Indigenous Mediation and Facilitation Project at AIATSIS generated a broad range of references relating to culture and conflict management in Indigenous Australia. It is a unique and valuable resource for alternative dispute resolution practitioners. <http://ntru.aiatsis.gov.au/ifamp>

## **Succession planning**

- > *Nothing Succeeds Like Succession: Succession Planning for Not-for-Profits*, Help sheet, Australian Institute of Community Practice & Governance, Our Community website. A guide to developing succession plans for community organisations. [www.ourcommunity.com.au/management/view\\_help\\_sheet.do?articleid=740](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/management/view_help_sheet.do?articleid=740)
- > *Succession Planning — Articles & Tools for Success*, CEO Online Australia. A collection of articles to assist in understanding issues and processes recommended for succession planning for businesses. [www.ceoonline.com.au/business/succession-planning.shtml](http://www.ceoonline.com.au/business/succession-planning.shtml)

### 3 STAFF ROOM

‘They make it happen.’ *CEO of Awabakal*, speaking of his appreciation for his staff.

#### MUTUAL SUPPORT

The best atmosphere for staff is collaborative and described by some as ‘being like family’. There needs to be a shared understanding of how the parts of the organisation contribute to the whole, through staff information, newsletters and good training. Constant reinforcement of the importance of mutual respect, understanding and trust in workplace relations is invaluable. Support and appreciation from management helps to develop a collegiate sense. Regular staff meetings will exchange information as well as giving feedback to staff from board or management decisions.

‘Management can be isolating... But we [program managers] make sure we get together socially. We can relate to each other’s experiences.’ *Program manager, Rumbalara*

**REAL LIFE:** At the Bama Ngappi Ngappi Townsville EmployNET office, staff have an informal meeting at 8.30am each day to discuss day-to-day issues.

**REAL LIFE:** The SWAMS CEO has committed to a monthly *CEO Broadsheet* outlining the work of the Executive and the outcomes of the Governing Committee meetings. This formalised feedback ensures transparency and helps prevent gossip and misunderstandings.

‘The Agency places a lot of importance on its staff and recognises that they are our greatest asset.’ *VACCA Annual Report 2005*

A workplace that is physically and emotionally safe is conducive to productive, harmonious work relations.

‘You catch more fish with the right bait.’ *Program co-ordinator, SWAMS*, explaining how better staff attract more clients

**REAL LIFE:** At SWAMS, a manager said: ‘When dealing with people, textbooks go out the window,’ especially when undergoing rapid change.

#### RECRUITMENT AND EQUITY

Recruitment for positions needs to be open and transparent. Good selection criteria help jobs to be awarded on merit. Balance in staffing between age, gender and backgrounds is desirable both for good service delivery and equity considerations.

**REAL LIFE:** At SWAMS, when all staff had to reapply for their positions, staff were given the opportunity for training in making applications, compiling CVs and interview techniques by an outside agency.

**REAL LIFE:** At Tweed Byron, hiring a 21-year-old administration assistant (through CDEP) has increased participation by young people in meetings.

Some providers of aged-care and other services give an option of male or female workers, as well as a choice of worker where privacy and confidentiality might be an issue because of kinship ties.

**REAL LIFE:** The CEO at Durri said, 'Equal treatment for all staff is our ideal even in a hierarchical structure. But from time to time issues of race and class are bound to surface with a staff of fifty people. In terms of workplace practices and codes of ethics, there is a standard approach for everyone...issues of racism or professional discrimination are not tolerated.'

**REAL LIFE:** Non-Aboriginal staff cannot 'speak for culture' and if staff wanted to be accepted at VACCA they must remember this always, one staff member said. They cautioned that non-Aboriginal staff must 'never assume knowledge of the cultural background' of situations.

## **TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

Ongoing training to develop skills and expertise will contribute to better delivery of services. Again, it is difficult to find room for it in busy schedules, but it is essential for the future of the organisation.

'Our performance management system is impressive...It's a good opportunity for self-assessment but is also an opportunity to provide feedback on how management is doing their job.' *Staff member, Wunan*

Training begins with a good induction program. Though it consumes time and resources, good induction pays off in terms of seeing how the whole organisation works and of understanding the principles and procedures under which it operates.

**REAL LIFE:** Papunya Tula has a policy of a three-month trial period for all staff, and new field workers will not work independently until this induction period is finished. By this time, it is usually clear to both the trial staff member and to the artists and management, whether or not they are suitable for the job. In some cases, when a suitably experienced field worker may not be available, the manager will spend time out bush with new workers to ensure consistency. One female worker spent six months on the job before working alone.



Management and staff can encourage the atmosphere of a 'learning' environment. Funding might be available from government, business or philanthropy for external training programs and formal qualifications. Internal training via staff mentoring and coaching through performance management can be a constant process. As well, secondment to other organisations and businesses can improve organisational development.

'Without training, everyone thinks within the box. But since training, we're much more able to think about innovations.' *Deputy CEO, Rumbalara*, talking about business management training for all program managers.

'Training needs to be targeted to the organisation. Before, staff would go to conferences and wouldn't bring anything back. Now, they bring back what they've learnt and share it with other staff or present a paper...' *CEO, SWAMS*

**REAL LIFE:** Realising a shortage of qualified Indigenous health professionals, SWAMS is co-operating with a local registered training authority to offer accredited courses.

Most organisations have job creation as part of their aims, so training for local staff is essential to break a cycle of requiring 'outsiders' to fill specifically skilled positions. However, it needs to be matched to the needs of the staff being trained.

**REAL LIFE:** Brambuk prefers staff training to be onsite for minimum disruption to work, and so that training is tailored to individual staff needs.

**REAL LIFE:** At Booderee, having a dedicated training officer position is supported by the joint management arrangement, and gives the impetus for training activities. The long-term goal of Aboriginal sole management provides a powerful catalyst towards building the capacity of the community and individuals to play a greater role in the complex task of managing a protected area.

**REAL LIFE:** Though Wollongong University is only 100km north of Booderee, it is socially and culturally far removed from life at Wreck Bay and proved to be a difficult place for young Community people to adapt to. Onsite training, or attending day courses in nearby technical colleges, is a better option.

There is possible conflict between needing professional and experienced staff from outside and the need for community development by employing local people. An innovative business approach is to integrate the two needs and attract staff with different backgrounds and qualifications who meet the needs of the organisation. There is value in a range of different backgrounds, provided the staff members feel a common purpose.

**REAL LIFE:** Bama Ngappi Ngappi staff at Townsville and Cairns said there was an understanding that ‘family comes first’. While there is flexibility in work/life balance, there are financial incentives for limiting the use of personal leave.

## **PAY AND CONDITIONS**

‘It’s better to pay decent salaries, so you attract decent staff who stay a decent amount of time...And it’s not just about salary, it’s also about conditions you work under...At the moment, you need to find very special people to do the job in the conditions of some Aboriginal organisations.’ *Program manager, Wunan*

A sense of commitment is often present in Indigenous organisations but this can only go so far if working conditions and pay are not competitive. Some organisations have developed packages to compensate for this. Examples include loan schemes from banks to make housing more affordable, in environments where lack of suitable housing can be a problem. A number of organisations offer salary packaging as an incentive. There also needs to be some compensation for the insecurity of short-term funding and the high cost-of-living in some locations. Some organisations provide loans to staff directly, under strict guidelines, while others regard this as an unsafe practice. Staff recruitment and retention is an issue for many remote and rural Indigenous organisations.

**REAL LIFE:** Durri’s strategies to support their staff — flexible working hours, social activities, career paths, and constant case study records of the ‘difference’ staff make — sustain and maintain loyal, professional and deeply committed staff.

‘I compare Durri with mainstream work environments. It is much better here. I like Aboriginal people. They are relaxed and appreciative. The job satisfaction is very high. If you give 150% to your work here it is recognised. In the mainstream it isn’t.’ *Non-Indigenous senior nurse*

‘I had worked previously at Durri, and when I left six years ago I promised myself that as soon as the opportunity arose to come back I would take it. I love working in this field.’ *Non-Indigenous nurse*

**REAL LIFE:** Brambuk purchased housing in the local community for staff, so they wouldn’t have to travel long distances to reach work.

**REAL LIFE:** Bama Ngappi Ngappi encourages staff to take advantage of salary sacrifice and a staff-lending discount through its bank to provide incentives. There are packages available through its bank to give financial advantages to staff. The bank offers an Employees Benefit Card to organisations with Public Benevolent Institution status which allows staff to use their pre-tax income through salary sacrifice to pay for everyday expenses such as petrol, clothing and groceries.

**REAL LIFE:** To add to the attraction of employment as a Papunya Tula field worker, management offers employment packages including five weeks' annual leave, and an annual airfare to any capital city in the country. Another benefit which goes with the job is the unique opportunity to purchase paintings.

**REAL LIFE:** Wunan operates in a difficult context with a need to attract professional expertise but unable to offer conventional accommodation. Kununurra has a deficit of housing and many staff are forced to live in temporary accommodation such as local caravan parks until more appropriate housing is available. Salary packaging and benefits negotiated by the organisation with suppliers are ways to attract professionals from the mainstream career path. However, professionals who do take up positions are often seeking career and life changes and therefore may find non-monetary benefits attractive. A fine balance exists between salary levels and cost-of-living in remote areas.

## **PRODUCTIVITY**

The most effective organisations ideally have lean staffing with a strong skill base where time is well managed and accounted for. This is essential in commercial-based entities.

**REAL LIFE:** Worn Gundidj develops workers' pride in their surroundings by keeping amenity areas clean, paying attention to Occupational Health and Safety and suitable work clothing. Realising that workers with empty stomachs are distracted, it provides ingredients for morning teas to improve productivity. As well, it provides a well-equipped gym for staff and community members.

**REAL LIFE:** Social activities can boost morale and productivity. EmployNET in Townsville has lunches and weekend activities for staff and their families. Wunan also takes staff out to lunch and has morning teas when a new staff member arrives or staff leave.

**REAL LIFE:** At Durri, there are programs for stress management and a high standard of professional credibility. Non-Indigenous staff often prefer to work at Durri, where job satisfaction is higher than in mainstream services. They feel they receive more professional support and that their work actually makes a difference to people's lives.

Many organisations rely on CDEP-subsidised staff to maintain their programs. With changes to CDEP by the federal government, this source of subsidised labour will diminish in some locations, putting financial pressure on many operations. Another disadvantage of CDEP-funded staff is that, naturally, they will leave if a full-time, fully funded position becomes available elsewhere. Turnover can be high.

While high staff turnover might have many causes, it can be a warning sign of problems in an organisation such as poor staff morale or too much work pressure.

## WHAT DO WE DO IF

### **... members of the one family are employed?**

**REAL LIFE:** At VACCA, family are colleagues within the organisation. However, these relationships are managed by ensuring that no direct-line management involves one family member supervising another family member.

**REAL LIFE:** At Booderee National Park, some current employees and contractors represent the second or third generation of family members engaged in managing the protected area.

### **... acknowledgement of cultural issues needs raising across arms of larger organisations?** (e.g. between field workers and corporate services)

- > Ensure a cross-cultural awareness policy is in place;
- > All new staff should take this course at induction;
- > Longer-term staff should complete course every couple of years.

### **... a staff member's attitude is culturally disrespectful or they assert cultural knowledge they are not reasonably expected to have?**

- > Build in behavioural feedback and 'modifiers' in staff performance feedback schemes so these can be remedied;
- > Adopt a proactive strategy of informing staff of the requirements for cultural respect while having mechanisms for tracking compliance and a culture of 'collaboration'.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### **Employment incentives**

- > *Community Banking Solutions*, Our Community website. Information on the Westpac Community solutions package, designed specifically for community groups. Benefits include waived fees, discounts and access to special services.  
[www.ourcommunity.com.au/financial/financial\\_article.jsp?articleId=1041](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/financial/financial_article.jsp?articleId=1041)
- > *Employers Guide to Salary Sacrificing for Superannuation*. Information for employers about salary sacrificing for superannuation contributions.  
[www.ato.gov.au/super/content.asp?doc=/content/38336.htm&mnu=6041&mfp=001/007](http://www.ato.gov.au/super/content.asp?doc=/content/38336.htm&mnu=6041&mfp=001/007)
- > *Employees Guide to Salary Sacrificing for Superannuation*. Information for employees about salary sacrificing for superannuation contributions.  
[www.ato.gov.au/super/content.asp?doc=/content/38172.htm](http://www.ato.gov.au/super/content.asp?doc=/content/38172.htm)

## **Hiring and managing staff**

- > *Performance Management and Staff Development*, info sheet, Management support online. A guide to understanding and implementing performance management schemes.  
[www.ncoss.org.au/projects/msu/downloads/resources/information%20sheets/mso\\_perfmgt.pdf](http://www.ncoss.org.au/projects/msu/downloads/resources/information%20sheets/mso_perfmgt.pdf)
- > *Sample Job Description*, Management Support Unit, NCOSS. A template for writing staff job descriptions.  
<http://www.ncoss.org.au/projects/msu/downloads/resources/other%20resources/jobdesMSU.pdf>
- > *Sample Performance Appraisal*, Management support Unit, NCOSS. A template for developing staff performance appraisals.  
<http://www.ncoss.org.au/projects/msu/downloads/resources/other%20resources/perfa ppMSU.pdf>

## 4 OPERATIONS AREA

If a sense of integrity in purpose, ethical behaviour and cultural integrity pervades the organisation, it will be obvious to clients and community. This applies to the product and services, as well as the demeanour of staff.

The core of the organisation is what it actually does. It can be a service organisation (such as a health centre) or sales-oriented (such as an art centre) or a bit of both.

### CLARITY AND PERSISTENCE

All staff, clients and community need to clearly understand the core business or businesses. All participants should feel free to identify gaps in service delivery and communicate them so they can be investigated by managers and the Board. Feedback from clients and staff members is essential and can result from good record keeping and well-documented client feedback. This is essential for informing the Board of management, for adjustment of services to meet needs and for acquittal to funding bodies.

Coordinators and managers need to actively and energetically seek funding through submissions, informing themselves of funding application dates, funding sources and the requirements of funding bodies. Staff need to make time to learn of relevant policy changes in specific program areas.

‘At the beginning, we would run programs on the smell of an oily rag. We’d write submissions based on bare essentials.’ *Board member, Rumbalara*

**REAL LIFE:** At VACCA, the Program Development and New Initiatives Unit writes funding submissions on behalf of the whole organisation rather than having individual program managers spending time on it.

There is a need to assess the cost/benefit consequences of new funding or activities and its effect on overheads and resources.

**REAL LIFE:** When Awabakal’s application for funding and a vehicle for a Night Patrol service was declined by the Attorney General’s Department, the CEO insisted on discussing the application. After persistent lobbying, the Department offered Awabakal the funding. However, this was not sufficient to make the program operational. Nevertheless, it was accepted by the CEO as a basis for further advocacy and a further approach to Attorney General’s. Eventually, the service was funded at a level where purchase of a vehicle was possible.

### POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Quality control is vital for ensuring consistent delivery of high quality services and products. A high level of awareness of policies and procedures helps in self-checking.

‘If senior staff and the Board live by policies and procedures, then staff realise it’s an important document.’ *Board member, Rumbalara*

‘I feel supported in my work by our policies and procedures.’ *Staff member, Rumbalara*

**REAL LIFE:** Rumbalara staff and Board have developed a policies and procedures document over a long period for organisational practice and governance. The process of its development is almost as important as the end result. It is a ‘common ground policy’ and a living document, and staff refer to it on a day-to-day basis, and use it as a check to see they’re on the right track and to avoid errors. It is reviewed and updated regularly and covers the full range of procedures such as leave provisions, working hours and potentially contentious areas such as vehicle use or drug and alcohol abuse.

**REAL LIFE:** Murdi Paaki has a customer feedback reporting structure which brings the ability to fine tune or continually improve and diversify service delivery. It also has a Business Management System, the operations manual, which ensures administrative, financial and operational systems are being correctly applied by supervisors and managers and provides support for all employees.

**REAL LIFE:** The VACCA CEO tells the story of Aboriginal staff members who complained about the introduction of time clocks to record working hours, saying that this turned it into a ‘white organisation’. The CEO explained that Aboriginal staff in an Aboriginal organisation should conduct themselves with the highest standards of ethical behaviour and with commitment to serving the community through effective performance.

**REAL LIFE:** At Rumbalara, the manager of the Health Service had to explain to clients that services which were previously available could not be under new policies and financial stringency. She has been able to reduce Rumbalara’s pharmacy bill from \$1000 to \$100 per month and found that sticking by procedures has made the process easier.

## **CLIENT-FOCUSED SERVICE DELIVERY**

‘At other agencies, they found me jobs I wasn’t interested in...But here they remember you; they’re interested in what you want to do...I got a job I wanted to do. It increased my self esteem.’ *Former client and now staff member of EmployNET Townsville*

‘When I worked in other agencies the client wasn’t so much of a focus...It was all about numbers...Here it’s different.’ *SWAMS staff member*

Often staff are balancing commercial operations (whether products or services) with social aims and investment. One should not be to the detriment of the other. The overall aim is service delivery which takes account of cultural, environmental, ethical and other values. Above all, service delivery should be focused on the clients and their needs.

**REAL LIFE:** SWAMS, with the assistance of Oxfam Australia, is using a Most Significant Change evaluation technique to show the positive impact of their services. The SWAMS CEO realises that ‘there are no stories in a number’ so uses human interest stories in funding submissions to show the positive effect of programs.

**REAL LIFE:** Awabakal distributes fruit and vegetable boxes weekly to elders at a nominal price (\$7.00) through the Home and Community Care program. This helps to ensure good nutrition for aged persons who may be finding it difficult to shop regularly.

**REAL LIFE:** At VACCA’s Support and Counselling Service in Melbourne, workers provide support, advocacy and guidance to families including access to a family counsellor. The program’s aims are to celebrate Aboriginal family values, promote Aboriginal family practices and child rearing, reduce protective intervention and strengthen family capacity and functioning, including facilitating family interaction and positive relationships.

**REAL LIFE:** VACCA gives each Indigenous foster child a ‘life book’ in which they can record important events in their personal history. The cover of each book is decorated with an Aboriginal design. They are also given a teddy bear with emergency phone numbers on it. As well, connections are fostered with the Indigenous community relevant to the child.

**REAL LIFE:** Durri practises holistic medical care, where cross-referrals are made from the various specialised and general medical services. They also recognise that Indigenous people might need additional practical help when accessing services and provides bulk billing, transport to and from the clinic and staff who understand but don’t judge clients’ lifestyles.

## **MONITORING, EVALUATING AND BENCHMARKING**

Comparing performance against ‘mainstream’ services is a useful check on effectiveness, even if resources are not comparable.

‘A constant challenge is measuring whether you’re making a difference.’ *CEO, Wunan*

‘Its important to know what’s going on in other Indigenous organisations so we’re not competing for the same funding.’ *Senior manager, Awabakal*

**REAL LIFE:** Durri aims to retain and develop professional credibility in organisational management, service delivery and measurable outcomes. Durri collaborates successfully with mainstream medicine, maintaining partnerships with GPs on field-based experience, employing specialists one day a week for greater access to their services, and using new technology to link to Prince Alexander Hospital in Sydney via telemedicine for enhanced access to medical expertise.

**REAL LIFE:** The Elders Services coordinator at Awabakal regularly attends Home and Community Care forums for Indigenous service providers in the region as well as forums for all Home and Community Care providers in the region. This enables her to know how



mainstream agencies are approaching common service issues, changes in program orientation and management and to generally avoid the Awabakal service operating from a marginal position.

**REAL LIFE:** Durri has developed a training package on action research as an evaluation tool. Training sessions have been delivered to the Family Services team and project staff.

## **BALANCING PRIORITIES**

‘When you are resident in the community, the job can be 24/7 and that’s stressful. You have to educate people to understand that implementation can only happen in working hours.’

*Durri mental health worker*

There can be a tendency for mainstream organisations to ‘dump’ responsibility for Indigenous matters, either to specific Indigenous organisations or to their own Indigenous liaison unit (e.g. in hospitals). Often the unit is neither staffed nor funded to cope with the additional workload.

**REAL LIFE:** All Aboriginal staff at VACCA are members of the Victorian or NSW Aboriginal communities. They cannot easily separate their identity as members of the community from their work role. This tends to mean that effectively they are never ‘off duty’ and can be approached about work matters out-of-hours when shopping, relaxing or visiting family and friends. It is a major challenge to achieve a balance between private and work life, and ‘burn out’ can result if this is not achieved.

**REAL LIFE:** Factors that have contributed to Dhimurru’s success include the Yolgnu people’s firm cultural foundation and long history of collaboration with outsiders, assisted by the social, transport and infrastructure features of Nhulunbuy.

## **WHAT DO WE DO IF**

### **... our services need to be expanded?**

- > Consultation with staff, clients and the wider community will provide a ‘wish list’, which gives rise to a proper analysis of staff resources and the costs of the changes. Only then can a decision be made.

### **... demands from clients outside of ‘office hours’ continue to increase and become unsustainable?**

- > This issue should be explicitly discussed with workers by managers and the CEO and there should be a mechanism within the organisation for the worker to a) identify that these additional demands are being made, b) encouragement to describe why this might be the case, c) mentoring and guidance given as how to manage this ‘boundary’

issue, and d) resources provided to alleviate the demand (e.g. a flexi-time arrangement for leave).

**... the reporting requirements from the organisations' funding source(s) requires that benchmarking is made against several kinds of standards?**

Here, it would be useful to try to identify whether the comparisons are based on similar or different sized Indigenous organisations, what the purpose of the organisation is and to try to address issues of quality and output both with numerical data as well as stories of success and personal wellbeing and satisfaction.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

- > *Monitoring and Evaluation News*, edited by Rick Davies. Up to date articles, reports, and resources on monitoring and evaluation. [www.mande.co.uk](http://www.mande.co.uk)
- > *The 'Most Significant Change' Technique: A Guide to Its Use*, Rick Davies and Jess Dart. A practical guide for organisations who wish to use Most Significant Change to monitor and evaluate social change programs and projects. [www.mande.co.uk/docs/mScguide.htm](http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/mScguide.htm)
- > *Theory of Change*, ActKnowledge & The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change. Theory of Change is an innovative tool to assist in designing and evaluating social change initiatives. [www.theoryofchange.org](http://www.theoryofchange.org)

### **Policies and procedures**

- > *Sample Policy & Procedures Manual for Management & Governance*, Management Support Unit, NCOSS. [www.ncoss.org.au/projects/msu/downloads/resources/other%20resources/policyprocedmSu.pdf](http://www.ncoss.org.au/projects/msu/downloads/resources/other%20resources/policyprocedmSu.pdf)

### **Submission writing**

- > *Submission Writing Resources*, Community Builders NSW. Provides links to online guides to writing submissions and funding proposals. [www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/finding\\_funds/submissions](http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/finding_funds/submissions)

## 5 SHOPFRONT / MARKETPLACE

Outlets for products can vary in scale from the magnificent showroom of Papunya Tula in Alice Springs, to the simple but effective bookshelf display at Wangka Maya.

### SALES

Not all enterprises are focused on sales, and it is the sole activity of hardly any. Nearly all have some kind of sales function even if small. It is surprising how sales income can add up even from small sidelines like t-shirts, caps or posters. For some businesses the income is considerable. Aboriginal art centres generate approximately \$28 million a year, and a similar amount is also generated by non-Indigenous dealers in Aboriginal art. The competing crowds of buyers at the 2006 Desert Mob exhibition, an annual display of works from Aboriginal art centres across Central Australia, reflected the intensity of current demand for Aboriginal fine art, with record sales of more than \$360,000 in the opening weekend.

Integrity of product is important both through the maintenance of copyright and the authentication of artwork which is particularly important for art centres often competing with 'backyard' operators.

**REAL LIFE:** In January 1987, Papunya Tula opened a street front gallery in Alice Springs. The paintings are marketed as fine art and the gallery reflects this. Whereas most other Aboriginal art galleries in and around Todd Mall sell and display a range of products, including crafts and jewellery, Papunya Tula sells only paintings. The décor of the gallery is sleek and modern, without the clutter of different products. The majority of Papunya Tula's 'high end' works are wholesaled and exhibited interstate.

**REAL LIFE:** All products sold by Worn Gundidj carry its own registered trademark and certificate of authenticity. The designs are from the textile and screenprint CDEP workshop and the bags, silk scarves and table linen are from original designs.

### CONTRACT SERVICES

While needing careful management to assure profitability, the provision of contract services to allied or outside organisations can provide resources (and training opportunities).

**REAL LIFE:** At Booderee National Park, Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd provides contract services to the Park. These include managing and staffing the entry station, maintaining roads, cleaning visitor facilities and Park buildings and horticultural services for revegetation and the Botanic Gardens.

**REAL LIFE:** Worn Gundidj CDEP contributes to the redevelopment and rehabilitation of Tower Hill. Its wholesale nursery provides stock to Parks Victoria for this purpose.

Revegetation and rehabilitation work is a major CDEP service provided on a commercial basis throughout the region.

## **MARKETING: KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS**

Linkages between the operational area and sales and marketing are essential to avoid a ‘them-and-us’ mentality between any parts of the organisation or with outsiders. The two are not separate but part of the same dynamic and purpose.

**REAL LIFE:** Papunya Tula field officers provide a link between the producers (the artists) and the market through their shopfront in Alice Springs and connections with the wider art world. Field workers spend one week a month assisting with sales in the gallery, and two or three weeks out bush. This staffing structure allows for field workers to increase their awareness and understanding of buyers’ responses to paintings, and allows field workers to directly pass on these responses to the artists. A field worker explained they will always tell an artist when one of their paintings is particularly well-received in the gallery.

**REAL LIFE:** Nitmiluk Tours has ‘a cultural monopoly’ on revenue raising activities in the Park. The manager says, ‘I have to be successful because that’s [park revenue] what I get paid out of.’ An Aboriginal tour guide notes: ‘It used to be them and us. Now it’s great: there are Aboriginal paintings on the boats and they have Aboriginal names, and we feel part of it.’

**REAL LIFE:** Brambuk has a bush food café and a gift / bookshop as commercial outlets. They are located in magnificent buildings, but, because of their location 3km out of town (Halls Gap/Budja Budja), special marketing and promotion are needed to lure customers. There is a similar problem for the Brambuk backpackers hostel which competes with a number of other outlets. Product differentiation is required, emphasising Indigenous aspects, accompanied by high quality service.

**REAL LIFE:** Papunya Tula field workers moderate the number of canvases distributed, particularly larger canvases. Staff and artists work effectively together despite tensions over this issue. At Annual General Meetings, artists will often raise their concern over the number of canvases they have been able to produce and, in response, the manager will explain the importance of controlling the quantity and quality of artworks produced to successfully meet the market.

**REAL LIFE:** Brambuk in the Victorian Grampians National Park promotes their venue using dazzling photography and targets different tourism sectors (such as educational groups, backpackers, Indigenous groups). They think laterally and apply for grants offered by mainstream funding providers rather than looking only to Indigenous specific programs and sources.

**REAL LIFE:** Wangka Maya organises promotional displays and a presence at seminars and workshops, festivals and open days at the Centre, movie nights and book launches.

## WHAT DO WE DO IF

### ... sales seem to be dropping off?

- > Innovative means of sales and service delivery include coordination with other agencies and utilising client feedback. A strong commercial perspective includes a good understanding of consumer needs and desires. This can result in a high marketing profile, whether service or sales oriented. Sometimes quite aggressive marketing strategies are needed in a competitive environment, linked with a focus on customer needs by all staff.

**REAL LIFE:** Worn Gundidj promotes its Tower Hill outlet in a brochure with a three-pronged attack: Aboriginal culture, Volcano and Wildlife Haven. They sell their unique screenprints (produced by the CDEP), refreshments and bush tucker ingredients. Stock is well presented and maintained, and appropriate new stock energetically sought. They offer interpretive tours and self-guided walks with an Indigenous component. Marketing effort is directed internationally at the Chinese market through a Victoria-wide initiative, highlighting the Bunjil's Trail as a day or overnight trip from Melbourne, with brochures in English and Mandarin.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- > *Black Pages*, a national on-line Indigenous business and community enterprise directory. [www.blackpages.com.au](http://www.blackpages.com.au)
- > Indigenous Business Australia Enterprises. This Australian Government program offers support for the acquisition, establishment and/or development of commercially viable small to medium sized enterprises. [www.iba.gov.au/ibaenterprises/IndigenousBusinesses.Com.Au](http://www.iba.gov.au/ibaenterprises/IndigenousBusinesses.Com.Au)
- > An online Indigenous businesses and community directory. [www.Indigenousbusinesses.com.au](http://www.Indigenousbusinesses.com.au)
- > Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme. Developed by Westpac in partnership with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, this scheme offers eligible Indigenous businesses with financial and advisory support. [www.westpac.com.au/internet/publish.nsf/content/bbfc%20Indigenous%20capital%20Oassistance%20scheme](http://www.westpac.com.au/internet/publish.nsf/content/bbfc%20Indigenous%20capital%20Oassistance%20scheme)

## 6 ACCOUNTS

### BUDGETS

A major function of the accounts area is to constantly monitor expenditure and check that everyone is working within budget. Strong compliance with budgets leads to respect from funding bodies, community and clients.

**REAL LIFE:** At Awabakal, program coordinators are expected to stay within their budgets. When a program appears at risk of overspending, the CEO enters into serious discussions with the relevant coordinator.

**REAL LIFE:** Modest and realistic expectations of financial rewards are essential. At Brambuk, the CEO said, 'We are not in the business of creating millionaires.'

### ACCOUNTABILITY

The accounts area must maintain a high level of accountability, transparency and reporting. The complexity of reporting is increasing and some organisations now need to employ a chartered accountant, not just a bookkeeper.

'We are now running the organisation like a business.' *Chief Financial Officer, SWAMS*

Funding agreements are becoming more intrusive on organisations, and can shape their internal workings and forms of governance. Often, the thresholds for accountability and reporting are much higher than the state-based legislation under which incorporation occurs.

**REAL LIFE:** Staff of Wunan, servicing a number of clients for payroll and other financial services, use six-minute costing blocks to account for their time. In late 2005, Wunan Business Services introduced the Advance Practice Management software system, commonly used by small accounting and business services suppliers. The system allows for closer monitoring of staff workloads and more accurate and efficient billing of services to clients. Staff appreciate this system, finding it an effective tool for managing their time and logging their hours spent working for clients.

### ACCOUNTS AND PLANNING

The finance area also has a strong role in planning. Accountants might analyse any initiatives, subject to a cost/benefit analysis and business case for performance in both sales and service.

**REAL LIFE:** Durri Medical Service kept data on Indigenous dental needs, documenting positive changes from consistent service delivery over an 18-year period. This supported their continued funding, and created support and interest from state and federal departments.

**REAL LIFE:** Bama Ngappi Ngappi changed its business model to adopting a financial analysis or cost-benefit perspective on how best to perform under service contracts.

## **REINVESTING**

Often there is a conflict between providing more immediate benefits to members and reinvesting funds back into the business.

**REAL LIFE:** As the Wunan Foundation was established with finances from the former Wunan ATSIC Regional Council, there are community expectations that Wunan's resources are for community, even individual use. The different expectations can be a source of tension at the local and regional level, and can attract government scrutiny.

**REAL LIFE:** The Jawoyn Association distributes funds from a Members' Emergency Fund in keeping with its Charitable Trust status, which means that it cannot pay a shareholder's dividend if it is to maintain its tax status. Funds are used for cultural and sporting activities, support of ceremonies, transport to hospital, for funerals, white goods, blankets, education scholarships, enabling carers to go south with ill patients, and a range of other charitable purposes. A system of aged care and disability pension food vouchers is managed via a list approved by the executive and for which formal medical documents are required for verification.

## **COMPLIANCE**

Most organisations face an expanding range of different reporting and financial accountability. Governments need to be persuaded to adopt a standardised reporting and compliance format applicable across all levels of government.

**REAL LIFE:** One remote Aboriginal community council had to acquit funding from 48 separate grants from sixteen state and federal government agencies and six non government organisations. (*Qld audit Office 2004, quoted Limerick 2006: 38<sup>1</sup>*)

**REAL LIFE:** Tweed Byron has remained fully funded by NSW Aboriginal Land Council since its inception in 1984. This is a significant achievement when considering the context of Local Land Council operations in NSW. (In 2004 only 8 percent of the 121 Local Aboriginal Land Councils in NSW were fully funded and classified as having no significant management difficulties and requiring minimum supervision by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council).

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<sup>1</sup> Limerick, M. 2006 'Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council Governance Case Study', unpublished document, Griffith University Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation.

## **FUNDING AGREEMENTS**

Funding is usually for an activity and rarely provides for the additional administrative costs involved for running and acquitting the grant.

**REAL LIFE:** The Wunan Foundation in the Kimberley and Murdi Paaki in central western NSW both offer professional financial services to regional organisations. This means that a critical mass of experienced professionals can be engaged in areas which have limited local options and infrastructure, and reduces competition for the same facilities and expertise.

Wunan's ultimate goal is to create a shared corporate backbone with partner or client community organisations in the East Kimberley through Wunan Business Services and Corporate Services. Services could include shared information technology systems, accounting systems, human resources support and legal advice. Their rationale is not to centralise service delivery or to create a 'super organisation' but rather achieve outcomes for independent organisations.

## **BUSINESS STRUCTURE**

A rethink of the way the organisation is structured can lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness.

**REAL LIFE:** Bama Ngappi Ngappi moved away from its traditional silo, single-contract management framework to a functional structure covering Back Office and Compliance, Sales and Marketing, Finance and Case Management. This structure views all contracts equally and acknowledges the fact that, while some contracts might be less attractive financially than others, together they make economic sense. It also allows them to address resourcing mismatches between contracts.

## **WHAT DO WE DO IF**

### **... we have difficulty recruiting financially literate staff?**

- > Indigenous Community Volunteers is a possible source. School leavers can be offered training opportunities to work themselves into the area. Also some accounting firms offer pro bono work.

### **... funding cycles comprise a mix of yearly, triennial and one-off grants?**

- > Many organisations face just such an issue and find themselves doing repeated and often parallel reporting to acquit these monies. Recommend dovetailing reporting text and outputs in quarterly blocks to minimise redundancy in reporting.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- > Indigenous Community Volunteers. ICV is a not for profit organisation providing Indigenous Australians with new skills. Communities, organisations or individuals



identify their skills needs and ICV matches them with volunteers to address those needs. [www.icv.com.au](http://www.icv.com.au)

- > Pro Bono Australia. A leading provider of resources to Australia's not-for-profit sector. [www.probonoAustralia.com.au](http://www.probonoAustralia.com.au)

## 7 BOARD ROOM

### WHO CAN BE BOARD MEMBERS?

Governance is a difficult issue for organisations of all sizes. In the case of Indigenous organisations, there is often a dilemma about the mix between strong community representation and having some ‘expert’ voices on the Board.

**REAL LIFE:** At Nitmiluk, one non-Jawoyn Board member said the ‘icon’ factor [of the park] ‘acts as a sanity check on all...The stakes are higher and we need to reach consensus in the greater interest. This applies to all Board members.’ A Jawoyn Board member commented: ‘In between Parks and Jawoyn, we’re always working together, making sure we keep it really good and making tourists happy,’ because as the Chief District Ranger pointed out: ‘The whole lot will suffer if we don’t get it together — biodiversity, the environment, the whole lot.’ As the Manager of Nitmiluk Tours expressed it: ‘If it doesn’t work for one, it’s not working, it’s symbiotic’.

‘You never stop being a Board member...If you want to be held in high regard, you have you to act with integrity at all times.’ *Board member, Rumbalara*

As with staffing, a decision is needed on whether to have an all-Indigenous Board, or a mix. The meanings of ‘Aboriginal owned, controlled and operated’ have to be debated and decided for each organisation. A wide range of governance models have proven effective varying from an entirely Indigenous Board elected from the local community right through to appointed Boards with members representing different interests and with different expertise.

**REAL LIFE:** The constitution of Papunya Tula Artists has remained unaltered since its inception. For more than thirty years, it has operated as an entirely Aboriginal-owned and directed company. The Board is elected annually by shareholders, who are required to be artists under the constitution. The company is under the overall direction of the Board, however significant decision-making authority is delegated to the manager and assistant manager, and to a lesser extent, the field workers. This delegation of power is indicative of a high level of trust between the Board and Papunya Tula staff.

[Papunya Tula] almost certainly owes [its] success to the calibre of the artists involved and to the fact that the government desire to run the enterprise at Papunya by means of an exclusively non-Indigenous Board was thwarted and the artists have had ultimate control of the enterprise. Megaw, 1999:9<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Megaw, M. Ruth. 1999. ‘Squaring the Circle: Papunya Tula Artists and Flinders University’ in *Twenty Five Years and Beyond: Papunya Tula Paintings*, Flinders Art Museum, Flinders Press, Adelaide.

## OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

A wide range of models for sole ownership and control exists in the three land management organisations studied. The balance between outside expert advice and internal expertise is a movable feast.

‘The number one goal for our Board is for the organisation to run smoothly. Any other kind of representation is secondary.’ *CEO, Wunan*

**REAL LIFE:** Rumbalara adopts an open approach to improving their practices. They regularly draw on a pool of consultants including an accountant, solicitor and an economist from their bank, for relevant advice and assistance. Looking outside the organisation for advice and assistance is part of their role as a ‘learning organisation’. A number of the Board members sit on other committees at a regional or state-wide level and all bring their wealth of experience in Indigenous affairs.

**REAL LIFE:** At Booderee, the long-term aim is complete control by the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community, either directly or through its Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd (WBEL). What role the Australian Government’s National Parks organisation then plays, if any, is open to debate and negotiation. All parties are enthusiastic about the aim and are working towards it through training programs and benchmarking services through WBEL.

It is commonly believed that Boards of Aboriginal organisations should primarily be ‘representative’ of the community they serve. People who can effectively articulate community priorities are perceived as suitable for the position of Board member, regardless of their understanding or experience in relation to an organisation’s specific objectives or activities.

**REAL LIFE:** ‘Wangka Maya are endorsed as the voice of language in the Pilbara. The Elders drive what happens there,’ a WA government official from the Department of Indigenous Affairs said.

**REAL LIFE:** For the Wunan Foundation the most important attribute for Board members is their ability to guide the organisation to operate efficiently and effectively in order to achieve its objectives. Establishing a representative Board for Wunan is particularly challenging given the large geographic region it serves.

Organisations cannot exist in a purely Indigenous world. They must be intercultural. However, this should not be at the expense of the centrality of Aboriginal culture.

**REAL LIFE:** The centrality of culture is based on the belief that maintaining and strengthening Koori culture will significantly assist families in their childcare and social

development. At VACCA, there is a clear appreciation that service delivery had to be informed by the lived experience of Aboriginality.

**REAL LIFE:** At Nitmiluk, a helicopter flew around a culturally restricted location and photographs were taken. Jawoyn insisted that the visitor who had taken the photos be pursued, the photos retrieved, various aspects of the helicopter operations be suspended, and that the staff of the company undertake cultural awareness training.

**REAL LIFE:** Tower Hill (Worn Gundidj) is emerging as a site for local Aboriginal community functions. A smoking ceremony on a weekend gave Indigenous toddlers their totemic name.

**REAL LIFE:** VACCA's organisational governance and functions adhere to professional processes and behaviours while drawing inspiration from the values of Aboriginal culture. In merging the two fields of values it has been necessary to challenge unexamined assumptions about Indigenous values and practices.

The underlying values can be expressed in a number of different ways, but at Dhimurru the Yolgnu values of northeast Arnhemland relate to the entire landscape and seascape:

- > The physical elements that unite people with the ancestral past and with the present physical and spiritual world;
- > The source of social connectedness and responsibility;
- > The source of sustenance and shelter.

'A dead fish goes rotten at the head first.' Shepparton business owner, talking about the importance of a strong Board and governance

## **TRAINING**

Again, as with staffing, induction is important for Board members, who otherwise will be thrown off the deep end, even if they are experienced in other areas. Similarly, regular updates and training can improve governance and provide a stimulus for creative thinking. Training courses specific to Indigenous Boards or mainstream courses can be chosen depending on preference.

**REAL LIFE:** The Board and senior management at Rumbalara undertake tertiary business management studies to increase specific skills and develop the ability to think creatively.

However, mentoring is also a very effective method of training.

**REAL LIFE:** The Chairperson of the Jawoyn Association at Nitmiluk said, ‘I grew myself up in this position. It was hard. There was no one around to give me support to where I am today. Brother [Mr Lee, the previous chair] made sure I was okay. We worked together on everything. I trained from him.’

Informal training and education can begin early with young people.

**REAL LIFE:** At Nitmiluk, children often attend Board meetings with their parents, and go on briefing and discussion sessions with their families on boats in the Park. At Booderee, there is a Junior Ranger Program for primary students introducing them to environmental and Indigenous issues and the Park.

## **PLANNING**

Many organisations have a strategic plan; some funding bodies require them and provide funding for them. In any case, it is helpful if there is some commonly accepted statement of aims and implementation that is accepted by the Board, management and staff.

‘Planning is always a group thing — everyone has a say.’ *Staff member, EmployNET Townsville, Bama Ngappi Ngappi*

‘It doesn’t matter how big or small you are, you need to plan...It’s good to be able to reinforce where you want to go.’ *Board member, Rumbalara*

**REAL LIFE:** During a recent workshop at Tweed Byron to discuss the Community Investment Strategy, the Coordinator described community factionalism as ‘coming to a head’ in so far as the strategy articulated a shared goal and enabled people to appreciate their common ground: namely, protection of the land at Fingal.

There are a variety of ways to organise planning, and the process can be almost as important as the outcome. Some organisations reserve time away from the office for planning; for others it is an ongoing process. Some leave it up to their CEO, some employ consultants as facilitators and others rely on community and client feedback. There is no single answer, but what is certain is that planning is vital for a successful organisation.

Planning processes should include service delivery planning. Research can be a useful means to consider organisational options. Planning can be hindered by a system of annual funding: a newly funded program can peter out after a 12- or 24-month period which lets down expectations.

The organisation has to evaluate possible programs which will attract funding to establish whether they are consistent with their main aims and are not going to cost more in dollars and resources than they are worth.

**REAL LIFE:** Wangka Maya has diversified its programs to ensure that language, culture and history all receive attention but is not deflected from its core business. The Board is prepared to refuse additional funds if the new project does not support the core objectives.

Members of the organisation at all levels can be inspired by the vision of key people or the group. Planning is not always to do with ‘nuts and bolts’ but must contain an element of excitement and promise for the future.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

The ability to adapt to and cope with change is vital if the organisation is to be sustainable. This includes recognising external change in the operating environment, to which internal change accommodates. Changing administration internally should not affect effective service delivery.

Give regular consideration to ideas for the future, either as part of the strategic plan or as a regular agenda item. Include ways of developing and exploiting the asset base of the organisation. A sustainable future can be assured if the asset base is secure, though continuation of the organisation is not an aim in itself. The aims of the organisation are the paramount consideration.

**REAL LIFE:** Tweed Byron owns six industrial properties with four rented commercially through a real estate agent.

**REAL LIFE:** At Wunan, commercial partnerships, such as with APT-Kimberley Wilderness Adventures, have increased Wunan’s asset base. A portfolio of property provides a further asset base and income stream.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

The Board has to accept responsibility for a high level of accountability, transparency and reporting to staff, members, community and alliances including funding bodies.

A clear separation of powers is important between the Board which sets policy and the staff who implement it.

‘Many Indigenous organisations fall down because their Boards manage as opposed to direct.’ *Senior manager, Rumbalara*

**REAL LIFE:** The Special Advisor at Nitmiluk said: ‘Everyday we’re accountable... We have to live this, day in, day out. We may not be accountable at an annual share meeting but we’re constantly being watched, facing constituents every minute. We have to be careful about how decisions are made in moving forward.’

**REAL LIFE:** One Board member at Rumbalara ‘copped abuse’ for not caving in to personal approaches to alter policy. She explained that Board decisions must be reached through an

open and transparent process, including declaring conflicts of interest. Over time, community members appreciated that processes cannot be subject to personal influences and services must be open to all members and clients.

**REAL LIFE:** Rumbalara has removed the allocation of housing from the Board to staff. By persistence in adhering to new policies, members now accept that ‘that’s the way it is’ and don’t blame individual staff members.

One method which some enterprises, such as Wunan and Brambuk, use is ‘hub and spoke’ operations where separate parts of the organisation operate with the central support, but whose commercial operations are run and accounted for separately. This can minimise risk to the whole enterprise if one section is failing.

## **WHAT DO WE DO IF**

### **... a ‘clique’ tries to take over the organisation?**

- > Some methods of election minimise this risk by having a turnover of members every two or three years. In other words, a ‘clean sweep’ of the Board is not easy in the short term. Building democracy is not an easy process: see the next section for ways of involving the community in meaningful ways to ensure participation by a wide range of people.

**REAL LIFE:** Rumbalara has an information day, with refreshments provided, before each annual election, where the chair, CEO and current Board members discuss the responsibilities and duties of the roles. This means that when people stand for the Board, they understand the time, work and challenges involved.

### **... a real or perceived conflict of interest arises amongst Board members?**

- > A conflict of interest policy must be developed by the organisation and reiterated at each meeting. It should ideally contain a statement of policy, a definition of conflict of interest and a section on implementation - between the Board and its advisory committees and also staff of the organisation.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- > Australian Institute of Company Directors. AICD, Australia’s membership institute for directors offers a range of courses in governance. [www.companydirectors.com.au](http://www.companydirectors.com.au)
- > Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC). Website includes information sheets & guidelines for corporations. [www.asic.gov.au](http://www.asic.gov.au)
- > *Boards, Committees and Governance Centre*, Our Community website. Supported by the Department of Victorian Communities, this website includes a range of resources

and tools aimed at improving the performance of non-profit boards.

[www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards)

- > *Indigenous Governance Awards*, Reconciliation Australian website. Includes information about the awards and links to web-based resources on good Indigenous governance <http://iga.reconciliation.org.au/igawards/>
- > Management Support Unit, NCOSS. Established to assist non-Government organisations in best practice in management and governance. [www.ncoss.org.au/msu](http://www.ncoss.org.au/msu)
- > Training Materials, Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations. Includes downloadable brochures on good corporate governance. [www.orac.gov.au/training\\_information\\_sessions/materials](http://www.orac.gov.au/training_information_sessions/materials)
- > *Indigenous Community Governance Project*. A collaborative action research project by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research and Reconciliation Australia. [www.anu.edu.au/caepr/lcgp\\_home.php](http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/lcgp_home.php)



## 8 MEETING AREA / OUTDOOR AREA

### REACHING OUT TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

All organisations have responsibility to a wider community.

### INTERACTION

'I strongly believe in Aboriginal leadership and ownership...If there is no community ownership of an organisation, it isn't a big problem if the organisation goes down.' *Board member, Rumbalara*

Who are the members? Whatever the constitution says about members, and who has voting rights, all organisations have responsibility to a wider community. The Board may allow access to services to non-members and, in commercial operations, usually the more customers who can be accessed the better.

It is important that services can be accessed regardless of language group, family or political affiliation.

Some mechanisms for increasing community knowledge and involvement include:

- > Hosting community events;
- > Inviting community to spend time at grounds;
- > Effective communication e.g. via newsletters, newspapers, posters, radio, noticeboards, websites (see chapter 1 for more information about this).

Strong connections with community at a local and wider level are essential and can be promoted through informal and formal means.

**REAL LIFE:** At Booderee, a visit was arranged to Bowen Island in the Park for fifteen local community members, some of whom had never had the opportunity to visit the Island. Further visits will enable Community to get to know or re-acquaint themselves with the diverse environments of the Park and to spend time on Country with Park staff.

**REAL LIFE:** The Awabakal Neighbour Aid Service run by the Elders Services program offers clients a wide range of social activities including computer classes, arts and crafts, market days, a women's group, a Melbourne Cup lunch, a Christmas party and aqua aerobics. Clients are encouraged to participate in active life programs and in 2005 Awabakal sponsored a group of elders to travel to Coffs Harbour and participate in the two-day Aboriginal Seniors Olympics.

The Awabakal Elders Service encourages community activity by holding information days, and engaging external organisations to assist and participate. For example, for the hearing information session, a representative from Hearing Australia attended and for an upcoming session on dealing with wills and funerals, a solicitor will be available to provide clients with information. Activities and information days are well attended and it is hoped that numbers

will further increase through the introduction of the Awabakal Community Transport Service and the availability of transport (Awabakal's most recently funded program).

**REAL LIFE:** Rumbalara holds regular community meetings, runs surveys on client service issues, has youth groups and sponsors important celebrations such as NAIDOC, Sorry Day and its own 25th anniversary. They have well maintained grounds skirting the Goulburn River and a newly completed BBQ area to host social events.

**REAL LIFE:** The Elders' Service coordinator at Awabakal identified a breakdown in respect for elders amongst local youth. She focused on improving relationships between the generations by creating the Experienced Hands Project. A key objective was to remind young people of the position of elders in their family history. The inter-generational participants undertook library research and completed their family trees, in the process learning basic research and computer skills. Another initiative in the same project involved making and decorating a didgeridoo and required groups of males working collaboratively (grandfathers, fathers and sons).

**REAL LIFE:** At Tweed Byron, the Land Council has to engage local community members in negotiations about possible developments, and work through issues at a pace that the community is comfortable with. There are high thresholds for agreement to sell and develop land. This has been managed in spite of longstanding divisions in the community.

**REAL LIFE:** A purpose-designed 'community room' has been built at Rumbalara so community members can access phone and internet services.

## **USING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE**

Many organisations are servicing communities which have deficits in infrastructure, complex health needs, limited access to housing, employment and alienated experiences of schooling and education. To balance that, there is often accumulated and embedded knowledge (local and regional) and personal and institutional networks to draw on in promoting community development.

**REAL LIFE:** The 'Bringing Them Home' coordinator at Awabakal, from outside the region, established a reference group from survivors of the Stolen Generation, mental health workers and community elders from the region to provide program guidance and ensure appropriate service delivery.

**REAL LIFE:** The most impressive aspect of Murdi Paaki is their community development framework which involves working with people from their starting point, hence the importance of community action plans many of which centre on developing or upgrading community facilities (such as the Doreen Peter Park in Goodooga and the Alice Edwards Village Park in Bourke). Community Working Parties are involved in every stage of project

development and implementation and are the source for feedback as a vehicle for continual improvement of service delivery. Every project is community-driven.

## **WORKING COLLABORATIVELY**

Collaborative decision making with community can be promoted through social events or more formal measures, such as general meetings.

There are various means of assessing community needs. Evaluation of service delivery is needed including mechanisms for client feedback and redress. Questionnaires, interviews and feedback forms can be used, properly collated and the issues addressed with the results made available to the community.

**REAL LIFE:** The staff and Chair of Tweed Byron have carefully considered how information can be effectively communicated to community members. For example, they have produced photographic posters presenting different possibilities for development and have developed plain English descriptions and explanations of the proposal. The coordinator works closely with their legal advisor to raise his awareness of cultural issues to ensure he engages effectively with members.

**REAL LIFE:** Murdi Paaki sends out regular media releases both to inform the community of its projects and to provide recognition for its participants.

Profile can be increased by entering for awards, or even by hosting them. Similarly, training scholarships are an end in themselves and increase profile, as well as contributing to staff development and organisational effectiveness.

**REAL LIFE:** The former diabetes educator at Durri was recognised for his services to the profession. The organisation has won awards from non-Indigenous bodies.

## **WHAT DO WE DO IF**

### **... feedback is needed on how the organisation should develop?**

- > Public meetings;
- > Social events;
- > Workshops;
- > Surveys, questionnaires;
- > Interviews.

### **... the constituency of the organisation is spread over a very large geographic area and communications about decision-making breaks down?**

- > Loss of membership and their goodwill, as well as perceived transparency of decision-making are at risk. It can be remedied with a media and communications drive which might include newsletters, electronic postings, sub-regional public meetings as well as a strategic tour by the CEO or other staff briefing communities and individuals who may have become disaffected.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- > *Community Participation*, Community Builders NSW website. A comprehensive list of practical and theoretical resources on community participation.  
[www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/participation/](http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/participation/)
- > *Planning for Country, Cross-cultural approaches to decision making on Aboriginal lands*, Fiona Walsh and Paul Mitchell (eds), Jukurrpa Books, Alice Springs 2002 on participatory planning processes and feedback.
- > Community involvement. This online 'toolbox' includes 60 tools for enhancing Urban Research Program Toolbox, Griffith University.  
<https://www3.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/>

## 9 ALLIANCES: GOVERNMENT

‘We are now in a strong position to negotiate [with government]. We don’t have to take what’s given...An organisation can’t be in this position if it’s not financially viable.’ *Board member, Rumbalara*

### TWO-WAY PARTNERSHIPS

The most successful alliances with government bodies occur when the organisation engages in a common policy discourse, where it ‘talks the talk’. This does not have to be a one-way street, and the organisation needs to keep its own aims clear in order to not be swamped by the priorities of government or its agencies. However, it is essential to develop the ability to understand and use the policy language of government.

This is especially difficult in times of dynamic change where policy is developing and shifting constantly.

**REAL LIFE:** One non-Indigenous CEO brought a wealth of skills from the corporate finance sector with a keen sense for decoding policy: what he termed ‘reading the policy tea leaves’.

**REAL LIFE:** Bama Ngappi Ngappi accepted new parameters, particularly for Job Network related schemes. It then worked to identify the discretionary space within the new regulatory framework to achieve its aims.

When an organisation is strong, it is in a better position to negotiate with government in a genuine and meaningful way. Provision to government of statistics showing successful operation, as well as individual case studies can help government to understand service delivery issues or the reality of sales. Demonstrating competent performance increases bargaining power.

**REAL LIFE:** In its funding submissions, SWAMS uses Most Significant Change stories to demonstrate the impact of services on individual lives.

**REAL LIFE:** Wangka Maya provides outreach services to government departments, such as cultural awareness training, interpreter services, language resources and assistance with language programs. These services are drawn on by Centrelink, the Police Department, WA Department of Indigenous Affairs and other government agencies.

Research into service delivery can inform policy and advocacy, improvements in service delivery and educating partners. A learning organisation is constantly generating and using information and feedback about its services and products which helps with its communication with governments.

Mechanisms for dealing with government vary. In Queensland, a system of ‘Community Champions’ has directors of government departments ‘championing’ specific communities in government decision-making, encouraging private investment and infrastructure and fostering communication. In remote WA, the state Indigenous Affairs Department uses ‘regional place managers’ to link Indigenous community agencies with federal government departments.

**REAL LIFE:** In negotiating with government, the Yolgnu people refused to concede ownership of their land via leaseback or other arrangements. In the end, Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area remained under their own control, with partnerships for different purposes and for sharing of expertise.

## **RECOGNITION THROUGH AWARDS**

While feeling internal strength is important, external recognition improves morale of all participants.

**REAL LIFE:** Dhimurru, which has built on strong financial and collaborative partnerships with government and non government agencies and industry, has received high-profile environmental management and conservation awards from both the Australian and Northern Territory governments. In 2006 alone, it won two awards and a third commendation.

**REAL LIFE:** In 2004-05 the Tweed Shire Council received a Local Government Biodiversity Management Award for successful restoration of salt marsh communities, designated as threatened in northern NSW. The award acknowledged the partnership with Tweed Byron. The partnership had the additional advantage of enabling the three Tweed Byron workers to gain Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management from TAFE and ‘significantly increasing the capacity of the Land Council to manage the important biodiversity of the Fingal Peninsula’.

## **PLACEMENTS**

Another way of ensuring reciprocal arrangements is to have partnerships for skills development and sharing, through secondments and placements both ways.

**REAL LIFE:** Brambuk now operates joint facilities with Parks Victoria and a close working relationship in providing tourist services. Some staff trained by Brambuk have found jobs in Parks Victoria, a mixed blessing when trained staff leave for other employers.

**REAL LIFE:** VACCA works with government-sponsored agencies such as Berry Street, plus some church-based agencies like Kildonan Child and Family Services, a Uniting Church body, with similar aims. Other agencies will draw on VACCA’s expertise and policy rather than simply pass on Indigenous cases. They also provide assistance where they can. For example, senior staff at Berry Street assist VACCA with interviewing processes.

**REAL LIFE:** In establishing a fledgling nature-based cultural tourism enterprise at Tower Hill Nature Reserve, Worn Gundidj contributed 20,000 seedlings and plants to a revegetation program. This involved partnerships with Parks Victoria, the sponsor: the Natural Heritage Trust, as well as other stakeholders such as Friends of Tower Hill and the wider community including the shires and other interest groups.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL AGENCIES**

Because local government is closer physically, alliances can be more difficult, but once prejudice and preconceptions are broken down, these alliances can be very fruitful, as well as providing avenues into private sector partnerships.

**REAL LIFE:** In the Tweed, the local council used a senior council officer to mentor the chair of Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council in the processes and administration of local government. Tweed Byron also does conservation work with the Tweed Shire Council

**REAL LIFE:** Wangka Maya's cultural awareness courses could stir up emotions and confront deeply-held views. Staff from the local hospital noted that feelings could be highly charged during these sessions but that the Wangka Maya facilitator managed to deal very calmly and professionally with such situations.

**REAL LIFE:** Murdi Paaki works with local government developing social capital and physical infrastructure in rural towns across central western NSW. Their programs and activities for Aboriginal people are spread through the fabric of the wider community.

## **WHAT DO WE DO IF**

**... there is a breakdown in communication with a local agency?**

> Social or sporting contacts can help to break the ice.

**REAL LIFE:** Awabakal regularly meets with Newcastle and Waratah police. The meetings are sometimes informal, for example a barbecue, with police using the opportunities to ask Awabakal's advice on how to address various problems involving Indigenous people. Formal meetings between Awabakal and local police are also held and involve high ranking officers. Awabakal competes in surf carnivals, golf tournaments and rugby games with the local police. The CEO describes this relationship as one based on 'respect for one another'.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

> *Partnership Self-Assessment Tool*, Centre for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health website. A tool (developed in the US) to assess how well

collaborative processes are working and how processes could be improved.

[www.cacsh.org/psat.html](http://www.cacsh.org/psat.html)

- > G. Sturgess 2001. *Beating the Bureaucracy: humanising modern government*, in Botsman, P. and Latham, M. (eds) 2001, *The Enabling State: people before bureaucracy*. Annandale, Pluto Press, pp. 187-219.
- > *Partnerships Between Indigenous Peoples , Governments and Civil society*, Australian Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission website. Includes materials from the United nations workshop on 'Engaging the Marginalised', International Conference on Engaging Communities 2005.  
[www.hreoc.gov.au/social\\_justice/conference/engaging\\_communities](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/conference/engaging_communities)



## 10 ALLIANCES: COMMUNITY AND PRIVATE SECTOR

‘We want to be a crucial part of the wider community without losing our identity.’ *Chair, Rumbalara*

### GIVING BACK

Effective collaboration is a two-way process: the foundation for alliances ought to be as equal partners with both sides contributing.

**REAL LIFE:** The CEO of Worn Gundidj said that the organisation gives back to the community. ‘We don’t want to be known as the black organisation on the corner who takes, takes, takes.’ They have given hospitality to Sudanese refugees in Warrnambool, held a barbecue and day of Indigenous cultural activities for children with terminally-ill siblings and formed partnerships with local city and shire councils.

**REAL LIFE:** Although health is not part of their business, Papunya Tula has raised more than \$1 million for Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku (Making all our Families Well) enabling the organisation to successfully develop and maintain a renal dialysis unit based at Kintore. They have also raised almost \$600,000 for a pool to be built in Kintore.

### NETWORKING

Wangka Maya gives cultural awareness courses for major public and commercial institutions in the Port Hedland region which aid them in their own service delivery.

‘Wangka Maya is always on track, responsive to clients’ needs and to requests for a change in content.’ *Nurse educator*

Your community can be a huge source of knowledge in effectively promoting partnerships in the private sector. Local community groups (such as conservation groups) can be strong allies, and open up avenues for other private sector partnerships and product development.

There can be huge value in networking, especially if it is interest based. While this can use a lot of resources, in the long term, it can pay off through information and support. It helps to be proactive and outwardly focused, engaging with clients and the wider communities and stakeholders.

Organisations can ask how their activities contribute to wider social issues which impact on non-Indigenous as well as Indigenous communities such as the need for reconciliation, dealing with rural decline, the need for viable communities and youth employment, and care and maintenance of the environment.

**REAL LIFE:** The Board at Nitmiluk makes a significant effort to meet local and broader public needs, allowing the Park to be used for Katherine Canoe Club events, the Australian

Red Cross Triathlon, the Katherine Ultra Challenge, Charles Darwin University's International Guitar Festival, Dragon Boat Races, and the Darwin Symphony Orchestra's Bolero concert on the Katherine River. The park is also often used for more informal local events like Tupperware parties and Christmas celebrations for various organisations.

**REAL LIFE:** Brambuk has an educational function by its very existence. It has combated the denial of Aboriginal presence in southeastern Australia and the controversy over the use of Aboriginal names in the National Park area. As with all historical presentations, there can be pressure to present images which are acceptable to tourists, who are encouraged to purchase products, and to exclude more controversial aspects of the past and present. There are also cultural barriers against presenting confronting images, and displaying painful and disturbing memories.

**REAL LIFE:** VACCA develops policy papers, background literature surveys and essays which are provided free of charge to key government service agencies to encourage a nuanced understanding of Aboriginal history and to foster appreciation of the centrality of Aboriginal culture. These literature reviews and the production of booklets for non-Aboriginal carers are clear examples of VACCA adopting a proactive approach to its relationship with their 'other'. It is also indicative of the strategic thinking and creativity of the organisation which employs a full-time policy officer and a part-time research officer.

**REAL LIFE:** Booderee National Park has outstanding aesthetic and recreational values and attracts large numbers of Australian and international visitors. Activities include walking, picnicking, camping, diving, fishing, bird watching and visiting historic sites, like the Cape St George Lighthouse. There are approximately 500,000 day-use visitors and about 75,000 camping nights each year.

In the inaugural NSW Aboriginal Health Awards 2004, Awabakal won the award for 'Most Innovative and Effective Program in Aboriginal Health' for their Tiddalick Takes on Teeth promotion. The idea came from an Aboriginal project worker from Hunter Oral Health Service who worked closely with the senior dentist at Awabakal. The kit has been endorsed by Australian Health and Medical Research Council and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and is distributed Australia wide as part of National Child Oral Health Program.

## **INDUSTRY**

Industry partnerships can be based on common interest, or simply a willingness to help. They can be used for administrative assistance, training, assessment and product and service development.

**REAL LIFE:** By working within wider industry forums, the Worn Gundidj managing director is seen by observers as an energetic and 'passionate' player. He brings to the Tower

Hill project a 'a keen sense of inquiry and ability to think like the consumer'. This is a notable asset in a competitive tourism market.

**REAL LIFE:** In Shepparton, local businesses have given support to key local Indigenous organisations. The business people concerned are aware of the opportunity costs to the wider community of ignoring pockets of Indigenous disadvantage. They see that opportunities are opened up through sport and employment to provide 'a fair go' and maximise economic potential for local Indigenous people.

**REAL LIFE:** Alcan Gove, the bauxite mining company now provides an annual grant to Dhimurru to assist with operational costs and has made a block of land available within the Nhulunbuy town lease for a new Dhimurru office.

**REAL LIFE:** Wunan Foundation's investment in and subsequent development of Kimberley Wilderness Adventures (KWA) since 2000 has seen them become the largest Aboriginal-owned tour operator in the Kimberley. With the support of Wunan Foundation, KWA provides employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people and leads the way in its development of relationships with local Aboriginal communities with regard to land access and tourism development. Recently, the Wunan Foundation commenced a joint venture arrangement with Australian Pacific Touring to help KWA achieve further growth and development for the future.

## **DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS**

**REAL LIFE:** In 2003-04, Wunan established a new website to improve accessibility to information on their entities and activities. They also published the first edition of their monthly newsletter *Pathways*. The *Pathways* newsletter is distributed to funding bodies and other stakeholders and is clearly a means of promoting the organisation to external investors.

**REAL LIFE:** Dhimurru has developed a greater diversity of partnerships than have been developed in the other case study protected areas, where there is a greater reliance on the core bilateral relationship between the Traditional Owners and a government conservation agency. This greater diversity of partnerships is in part driven by the need to secure sufficient operational funding year by year, a need more securely met within joint management partnerships. The absence of a dominant government partner, however harmonious the partnership, stimulates innovative approaches and encourages other potential partners that may be less willing or able to become part of formal joint management arrangements.

Some organisations use outsiders, as advisors or on secondment, to accelerate organisational change. There is no need to dwell on the possible pitfalls of this tactic in causing division, but it can lead to creative solutions when done with goodwill. Also, outside advisors can be a source of specialist advice, often not available within the enterprise.

**REAL LIFE:** The Wunan Board’s current commercial advisor is a senior partner in the Perth office of Ernst & Young and has experience in Aboriginal economic development. Under Wunan’s constitution, this position has voting rights plus additional rights such as rights of veto, for example over constitutional changes, acting as a ‘shark repellent’.

**REAL LIFE:** Dhimurru receives assistance from university students undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the field of Indigenous environmental management as well as environment volunteers. Its friends and supporters include Australian Conservation Volunteers, World Wide Fund for Nature, Natural Heritage Trust and the Threatened Species Network.

## **PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIPS**

The philanthropic sector can be a useful source of support, but also can be a lot of hard work. Many demands are made on it and tapping into it needs large resource allocation. Benefits of working with the philanthropic sector include:

- > The reporting requirements of philanthropic funding bodies may be less onerous than those required by government;
- > Grant application processes are less time consuming;
- > Decision-making is more streamlined — funding decisions are usually made within one to two months;
- > Philanthropic funding bodies have acknowledged that overheads are a reality for community organisations and are considering ways to address this problem;
- > There are not as many ‘strings attached’ as in partnerships with government.

There are however, significant pitfalls and risks involved in philanthropic partnerships:

- > Presentation is an essential consideration when dealing with the philanthropic sector. Wunan’s Business Development Manager explained that ‘organisations often spend more time chasing money than what it’s worth’ as they lack the capacity to effectively deal with the sector;
- > Corporate or individual philanthropic partners can be easily offended so maintaining good relationships is essential;
- > Partnerships between community organisations and corporate philanthropic groups can prove challenging as they are based on meeting the requirement of different sectors; the community service sector and the commercial sector.

**REAL LIFE:** An understanding of the private sector has enabled Wunan to develop profitable partnerships with philanthropic institutions to harness the skills and expertise of staff with private sector experience in community sector work. Not all staff members with such experience have previously worked with Indigenous people. However, many of them have worked in other arenas of the community sector (such as disability services and raising funds for medical research). An example is the Something Concrete Project developed in partnership with the Beacon Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation, and WA Department

of Housing and Works. The project resulted from a study undertaken by Wunan (supported by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations) into Indigenous business opportunities in the housing sector. This project is in its development phase.

In 2003-04, Wunan gained Deductible Gift Recipient and Public Benevolent Institution status from the Australian Tax Office to encourage further external investment.

## WHAT DO WE DO IF

### ... the organisation is not outward-looking and is stuck 'within the box'?

- > Even if time is short, try to organise social activities with outside groups, businesses and agencies. There are a range of informal means for having contact with a wider public though hosting a barbecue is a popular one which doesn't need too much organising. More formal means include placement of staff in other businesses, cross-membership of industry bodies. Sometimes, guest speakers from another environment can help to shake things up.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- > *Centre for Community-Business Partnerships*, Our Community website. Includes practical information and a brokering service for community groups who are interested in forming a partnership with businesses. [http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/business/business\\_main.jsp](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/business/business_main.jsp)
- > *Partnerships with the Business Sector in Developing Communities*. John Murphy, 2000. [www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/finding\\_funds/accessing/vol.html](http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/finding_funds/accessing/vol.html)
- > *Philanthropy Australia*. Includes advice for grantseekers. You can also order a copy of the Australian Directory of Philanthropy, a comprehensive reference on sources of non-government funding in Australia. [www.philanthropy.org.au](http://www.philanthropy.org.au)
- > *Social Ventures Australia*. A not-for-profit organisation providing funding and practical advice, based on business principles and skills from the commercial sector, to work in partnership with social entrepreneurs to help combat some of Australia's social problems. [www.socialventures.com.au/home.asp](http://www.socialventures.com.au/home.asp)
- > *Koori Business Network, Business Victoria*. Provides programs and business support to assist in the sustainable social and economic growth of Koori communities and businesses throughout Victoria. [www.business.vic.gov.au/buSvIc.608305398/STaNdaRd//pc\\_51149.html](http://www.business.vic.gov.au/buSvIc.608305398/STaNdaRd//pc_51149.html)