



Ngaanyatjarra  
Pitjantjatjara  
Yankunytjatjara  
Women's Council

# *Ngapartji Ngapartji*



**Working and Learning Together**

Workforce Development and Capability  
Framework for NPY Women's Council

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This Workforce Capability Framework has been adapted from:

Department of Health and Human Services (2017), Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework: Tool Kit for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, State Government of Victoria, Australia.

Our adaptations involved removing some capabilities that were less relevant for our organisation and adding others that reflected the unique context of NPY Women's Council and that we feel are critical. The adaptations were based on findings from an internal Aboriginal Workforce Development Project conducted in 2018/2019 that involved extensive consultations with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees.

## Message from the CEO and Director

Welcome to the first edition of Ngapartji Ngapartji; Working and Learning Together. A Workforce Development & Capability Framework for NPY Women's Council.

This Framework provides a common tool that empowers all individuals and teams to learn and develop the key capabilities required for success.

At NPY Women's Council we believe in the strength of our people, our culture, tjukurpa, the wisdom in our languages and the collective agency of women. We continually look to women's authority, law and culture to deliver on our vision and purpose. Our vision is to see Anangu live well in both worlds and our purpose is to support all Anangu, especially women and children, to have a good life, guided by culture and sound governance.

NPY Women's Council's continued growth and success depends on our people. Engaged employees feel a profound connection to their organisation and one of the most important factors in creating this type of workplace is to put people at the heart of everything we do. It is only with the

successful performance of every employee that we can achieve great results and deliver on our strategic objectives. A key element of this is attracting, developing, and engaging the right people to ensure NPY Women's Council remains a leader in women's law, authority and culture to deliver health, social and cultural services for all Anangu.

Ngapartji Ngapartji ensures each of us work towards turning our strategic vision into reality, all Anangu living well in both worlds. We also encourage you to use this framework as a tool to assist you in the proactive management of your career and ongoing professional development here at NPY Women's Council.



Liza Balmer  
Chief Executive Officer



Maimie Butler  
Director



## Preface

The Workforce Development and Capability Framework is a holistic and evidence based approach to Aboriginal employment at NPY Women's Council (NPYWC).

It is unique to our context, and importantly, one that requires Anangu cultural skills and knowledge to be embedded in all areas of practice. It believes that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees are essential to the operation of the organisation to ensure the right mix of values, knowledge and skills.

It is also a framework that focuses on deeper learning in the areas of cultural safety, cultural awareness, knowledge exchange (both ways' learning), malparara way and trauma-informed practice. These are all areas that we feel contribute to a working environment that sustainably and realistically improves Aboriginal employment.

It was important to us that we created a framework that was aligned with our models and philosophies of work. To this end, we dedicated a lot of time visiting the remote communities we work with to have conversations about what work means to our

staff. Relationships, language and culture, growing through work and empowerment were all strong themes that people felt needed to be acknowledged and included in this document.

It became clear during these conversations, a traditional approach to Aboriginal workforce development would not sufficiently address the values and aspirations of our staff. We strongly believe that this Workforce Development and Capability Framework places the responsibility on everyone to be constantly learning and developing, whilst contributing to the shared goals of the organisation.

Lastly, this project would not have been possible without staff, managers and directors graciously giving us their time, insights and expertise into this area. We would also like to thank our external partners and funding bodies for contributing to this project.

Melissa Lindeman, Heather Smith and Wayne Dalton  
People and Workplace Services

# Introduction

NPYWC is a member-led, Anangu controlled and governed organisation that puts the voice and agency of Anangu first in understanding community needs, ideas and strengths.

The framework is set out in two separate documents, the first outlines key terms and definitions that need to be expanded upon to give some background and context to employment at NPY Women's Council. It also speaks to our Guiding Principles and Values that we follow and expect from employees.

The second document explains how the framework is applied on a practical level and what it means for the individual, team and organisation.



# Commitment to Employment

NPYWC is committed to ensuring that Anangu are engaged in paid employment in all program areas, and that these numbers increase annually. This includes Anangu who have language, cultural and contextual knowledge and skills.

There are different approaches to employment of Anangu across the organisation and these depend upon program needs, and the model of operation in place within each program. The programs include the social enterprise Tjanpi Desert Weavers and the Uti Kulintjaku (UK) team. Tjanpi Weavers are not 'employed' as such, but still receive an income for their art works. Members of the UK team are employed casually but make a crucial contribution to the organisation. The UK model of employment has proved to be helpful for the way that UK projects are developed and implemented and fits with the complex lives of Anangu.

The work of the UK teams is invaluable to the whole organisation and beyond, and the casual roles in the UK teams are amongst the most coveted in the region (Togni, 2018).

It is important that all paid employment opportunities for Anangu at NPYWC instil a sense of pride and that a real contribution is being made, as well as providing opportunities for learning new skills to increase employment options. However, it is also important that the definition of work is not narrowed to only include formal, ongoing full time or part time roles. Sometimes Anangu prefer to work a small number of casual hours and then build up their hours as life circumstances change and/or their confidence grows. Some Anangu make art works for Tjanpi and work casual hours in other programs within the organisation.

The organisation is committed to growing the Aboriginal workforce sustainably according to the aspirations of Anangu. This requires us to take a broad view of the nature of paid work and that we aim to provide many different pathways to and within the paid workforce. Learning takes time and all staff are employed at NPYWC because of the contribution they can make as well as their willingness to engage in both ways learning (learning from each other).



# *A Learning and Development Framework*

Throughout this Capability Framework are references to learning and development. NPYWC recognises that a consistent and conscientious organisational approach is required to ensure that learning and development strategies support the goals of the Workforce Capability Framework. Therefore, a separate document will be developed in 2020 to ensure such an alignment, as well as to ensure that the organisational culture is one in which the ongoing learning and development of its employees is embedded and well supported. The document will articulate the specific strategies that NPYWC will use to provide contextually appropriate and tailored learning and development opportunities.



# Malparara Way

Malparara Way is a cross-cultural practice framework specific to NPYWC that was developed in the early 1990s. 'Malpa' means 'friend or colleague' in Pitjantjatjara, and 'malparara' means 'alongside a friend or colleague'. Malparara describes a way of working where two staff members, one Anangu and one non- Aboriginal, partner up to deliver services. The Anangu worker brings their skills and knowledge of language, culture, history, land and family to the work, and the non- Aboriginal worker brings their professional/technical expertise in whatever field they are employed in (e.g. disability, youth work, domestic and family violence, etc.) as well as their skills in navigating non- Aboriginal institutions and systems of service delivery (for example report writing, administration and so on). The idea is that working Malparara allows for Anangu and non-Aboriginal cultural

and professional knowledge to be combined to provide the best possible service for Anangu; one plus one equals three. Malparara Way provides accountability to the work of NPYWC to ensure its alignment with Anangu values and preferences.

The Malparara model has been important to the development of NPYWC. However, the size and complexity of the organisation has grown, and newer ways have emerged to incorporate Anangu specialist skills and knowledge into the work of the (now) more complex organisation. These existing and emergent roles honour the history and core values of the Malparara model but also incorporate other aspects of culturally safe practice and the key value of learning and working together.



# Knowledge Exchange 'Both Ways' Learning

The term 'both ways' learning describes a philosophy of education that brings together Indigenous Australian traditions of knowledge and Western academic disciplinary positions and cultural contexts, and embraces values of respect, tolerance and diversity (Ober, 2009).

*NPY Women's Council operates with the understanding that employees ensure there is an ongoing exchange of knowledge and skills. Western knowledge, which provides the basis of professional disciplines such as social work, nutrition science, youth work, management and so on, is not in a hierarchical relationship with the cultural and contextual knowledge of the NPY Lands and Anangu. They exist side by side, and practitioners of all backgrounds must engage in a process of both ways learning so that these different knowledges and perspectives are combined to develop new knowledge and perspectives that is then incorporated into the work of the organisation.*

Malparara Way is based on such an understanding: a shared and respectful knowledge exchange. However, it is important to remember that cultural knowledge is learnt over a lifetime, and it is unrealistic to expect that the acquisition of cultural knowledge is possible to the same or similar degree as that held by the members of a cultural group. For non-Aboriginal employees, developing cultural

awareness is an important and on-going process, but it is the critical self-reflection on the power arising from cultural differences that is equally or more important. All employees at NPYWC work in the 'cultural interface', where two (or more) knowledge systems intersect.

As is the case for a culturally safe practitioner, it is 'not the facts of Indigenous realities but as the context that provides the conditions for intellectual reflection and engagement with contemporary Indigenous issues' (Nakata, 2008, p.225). 'In this space are histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition how we all come to look at the world, how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday and how and what knowledge systems we operationalise in our daily lives' (Nakata, 2008, p.191).

Developing culturally safe practice, and 'both ways' learning (knowledge exchange) are journeys. 'Both ways' learning defines that journey as a shared one: "drawing knowledge from each other through talking, discussing, debating, challenging, and reflecting. Learning is not in isolation, or in competition, rather it is collaboration" (Ober, 2009, p.38).



# Cultural Safety

We define cultural safety as an ongoing journey of learning and reflection. It requires all employees to reflect on their own cultural biases and understandings in relation to people they are interacting with from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural safety departs from related concepts, such as cultural competence, in its emphasis on acknowledging power relationships arising from cultural differences rather than emphasising knowledge (of the 'other' culture) and requires critical self-reflection.

Thus, cultural safety requires employees to engage in dialogue with their clients' /service users (or simply those from different cultural backgrounds with whom they are interacting), reflect on power relationships and systems that may continue to colonise and disempower those already marginalised, and use reflective processes to minimise the risks associated with dominance and powerlessness (Ramsden, 2002; Taylor & Guerin, 2010).

Cultural safety is inherently strengths-based. The goal of deeper engagement and communication requires employees to focus on critical self-reflection (on their own cultural perspectives and biases), regard people as the experts in their own lives, and therefore create space for alternative perspectives to replace those that may otherwise have been imposed by cultural dominance.

Crucially, the outcome of culturally safe practice is a two-way relationship built on respect and a bicultural exchange which aims for equality and shared responsibility (Brascoupé & Waters, 2009).

In this definition culture can also encompass cultures that are not based on ethnicity or race, such as ableness, age, gender, sexual orientation, professional discipline and so on; in fact, any form of culture that can lead to an unequal power relationship.

Cultural awareness (referring to knowledge of cultural mores and nuances) is also an ongoing process of learning. An employee's cultural awareness begins with the organisation providing an introduction to local Anangu language and culture at commencement, with the expectation that each non- Aboriginal staff member remains engaged in building on their own cultural awareness to enhance their practice.

This is also an important aspect of cultural safety. Some staff are recruited to the organisation because of their high level of cultural knowledge, amongst other skills.

These employees also participate in the orientation (including cultural awareness) program and make valuable contributions to the cultural awareness development of their colleagues, as well as learning from the other participants in their respective areas of expertise.

An important value for NPYWC is that we are all 'working and learning together' (NPYWC Director, Margaret Smith, 2019).



# Trauma Informed Practice

Trauma can be described as an event that is psychologically overwhelming for an individual, involving a threat (real or perceived) to that person's individual's physical or emotional wellbeing (J. Atkinson, 2013). It can refer to a one-off event, or multiple and complex forms of traumatic experiences. A great deal of research has been undertaken in recent years demonstrating the impacts of trauma on the human brain as well as on people's physical, mental, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing (C. Atkinson, Atkinson, Wrigley, & Collard, 2017). It is well recognised that Aboriginal Australians are at higher risk of experiencing all forms of trauma, including intergenerational or historical trauma (referring to the collective experience of trauma associated with past events). Therefore, organisations providing services in Aboriginal communities need to ensure that all aspects of their operations operate through a 'trauma lens' (J. Atkinson, 2013; Menzies, 2019).

Trauma informed practice can be understood as an approach that integrates awareness of traumatic stress in the provision of services to people who have been exposed to trauma, including the need for understanding the complex developmental impacts of traumatic stress and identifying pathways toward enhanced wellbeing (Champine, Matlin, Strambler, & Tebes, 2018). Research has demonstrated that certain ways of working with individuals and groups who have experienced trauma can contribute to

a more positive experience of accessing services and assist in the journey of healing and recovery (Champine et al., 2018). This work extends to a more specific focus on developing approaches for working in Aboriginal communities (C. Atkinson et al., 2017), including work undertaken at NPY Women's Council (Togni, 2018; Tucci, Mitchell, Lindeman, Shilton, & Green, 2017).

People who work alongside those who have experienced trauma for long periods of time can experience what is referred to as vicarious trauma through their continued exposure to traumatic material. NPY Women's Council accepts that exposure to vicarious trauma is a risk for many of its staff members that requires a considered and consistent approach to its management.

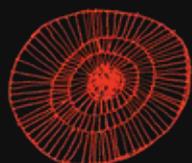
NPY Women's Council strives to be trauma informed in all facets of its scope of practice, including in its work with individuals, families, and communities as well its human resource practices. Some of the capabilities in the framework directly address basic concepts of trauma informed practice, and others more broadly such as through the emphases on cultural safety, the centrality of relationships, supporting client control and agency, and in providing programs that support cultural connection and Anangu knowledge (C. Atkinson et al., 2017).

## References

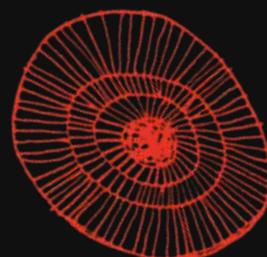
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# Guiding Principles

These values guide the work of NPY Women's Council the organisation. NPYWC expects all employees to work in accordance with these values and therefore they are incorporated in the Workforce Capability Framework.

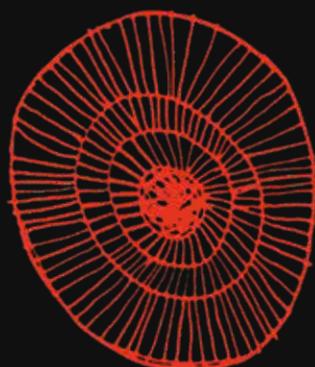
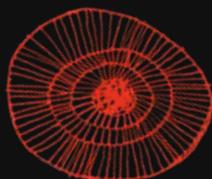


***Piluntjungku***  
**Peaceful and calm**

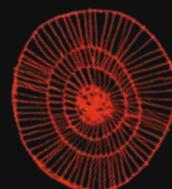


***Ngapartji ngapartjiku kulira  
iwara wananma tjukarurungku***  
**Respect each other and  
follow the law straight**

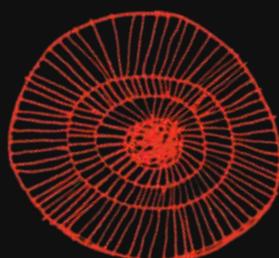
***Kunppungku***  
**Strong**



***Kututu  
mukulyangku***  
**Kind hearted**



***Kalypangku***  
**Conciliatory**



***Tjungungku***  
**United**

It is vital that growth in employment of Aboriginal people within the organisation is both sustainable and meets the goals of Anangu communities.

NPYWC is committed to ensuring opportunity for employment and development for Aboriginal people. This includes Anangu who have language, cultural and contextual knowledge specific to the region and particular communities. To this end, NPYWC operates with the following expectations:



### **Cultural Safety**

Already mentioned above, NPWYC provides a culturally safe workplace where all employees are supported and valued for their contribution. Anangu culture and world views are central to the core business of NPWYC, and thus capabilities concerning contextual and cultural knowledge, as well as cultural safety, feature in the framework.

### **Relationships**

NPWYC operates with a profound respect for relationships, and expects that all staff will prioritise developing quality relationships - both within and external to the organisation - with the aim of deepening the ability to 'listen and understand'.

NPWYC recognises that partnerships and collaborations with other organisations who respect the values of NPWYC are important strategies in improving Aboriginal employment opportunities, and its workforce capabilities in general.

### **Accountability**

Each member of the NPWYC leadership group is accountable for the continued development of their staff. This includes improving the realistic representation of Anangu in their workforce, dependent on the nature of the program and aspirations of individual Anangu.

### **Leadership**

The leadership group will continue to develop, review and refine initiatives to improve opportunities for Anangu employment within the organisation, with the understanding that change will occur only if all staff are actively engaged in reflecting on and developing their own capabilities.

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