Context

Empowered Communities is led by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people in ten regions across Australia. We are working together with government and corporate Australia to reform how Indigenous policies and programs are designed and delivered.

Empowered Communities (EC) started in 2013 and is outlined in a comprehensive design report. This report represents the shared engagement, thought leadership, reform agendas and design work of Indigenous leaders, communities and organisations across the ten Empowered Communities regions. It proposes a range of reforms that build on decades of effort by Indigenous peoples to reclaim control in driving our own priorities for development. The principles of EC are:

➢ Aboriginal-led agency and responsibility is at the heart of our principles on Indigenous reform. It is non-negotiable and assumed in all the principles listed below.
➢ Community and government programs must support Aboriginal agency and responsibility.
➢ Participation in our reform movement is on an opt-in basis for those keen to shape their destinies.
➢ All program design must be site-specific to allow for our different laws, cultures, governance and ways of making things happen.
➢ Innovation in program design is always encouraged. We will apply what we learn each time to continually improve and learn from mistakes.
➢ Funding for programs, investment across regions must be based on outcomes, with communities with flexibility to innovate, do things better and incentives used to change behaviours.
➢ Program outcomes must always be measured so we can improve how they are designed and put in place to make them more efficient and effective.
➢ We will actively seek to learn from each other and from others in the business and not-for-profit sectors. We will share good practices and make sure results are delivered.

A short video introduction explaining Empowered Communities can be found at:
https://empoweredcommunities.org.au/

The Design Report provides details about the EC model:
https://empoweredcommunities.org.au/about-us/our-proposal/

Each EC region determines their own priorities and approach for investing in these priorities, the EC leadership agreed that there were five (5) common Empowered Communities National Priorities:

1. That children have access to quality education opportunities, and that they are supported to be ready, willing and able to take advantage of those opportunities, and attend school with the active involvement and encouragement of their parents and families
2. That communities work urgently and seriously to tackle the problems of domestic, family and community violence and alcohol and drug abuse, and ensure that communities are safe and the rights of all community members are recognised and respected
3. That the safety and welfare of children and the vulnerable, by which we mean people who are frail, aged or disabled, remains of paramount concern and that they are cared for, healthy, supported and safe in their families
4. That all capable adults participate in training, work or meaningful engagement in community and family life
5. That all community members have access to appropriate housing options, and that there is acknowledgement of the mutual responsibility between housing providers and community around availability, choice, maintenance and upkeep of houses

In the NPY region, we have named another specific priority area reflecting what Anangu see as critical for the future:

6. Anangu led decision making and Community Empowerment

For the Aboriginal people (Anangu) of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) region all these priorities are underpinned by maintaining strong culture embodied in:

- **Tjukurpa** (Law)
- **Walytja** (Family)
- **Manta** (Country)
- **Wangka** (Language)

In March 2015 the EC Design report was submitted to the Commonwealth Government for their consideration, and to gain commitment for the implementation of Empowered Communities.

In December 2015 the Commonwealth Government committed to support an initial investment in the regional components of Empowered Communities, including the establishment of a backbone organisation in each region to assist with the next steps of design and implementation at a regional level.

With the initial 3 year investment expiring in July 2019, the Government confirmed a further 3 year investment to support the Empowered Communities outcomes (through to June 2022) with a further two year funding period anticipated (to June 2024).

Working with and under the direction of each region's Empowered Communities Regional Steering Committee, the backbone organisation (Secretariat) is key to developing the roadmap for each region's approach to Empowered Communities delivery.

NPY EC Region and Organisation

The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Lands[1] span the tri-state central desert region of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, covering 350,000 square kilometres and encompassing 26 remote communities and homelands, with an overall population of around 6,000 Anangu and Yarnangu (Aboriginal people)[2].
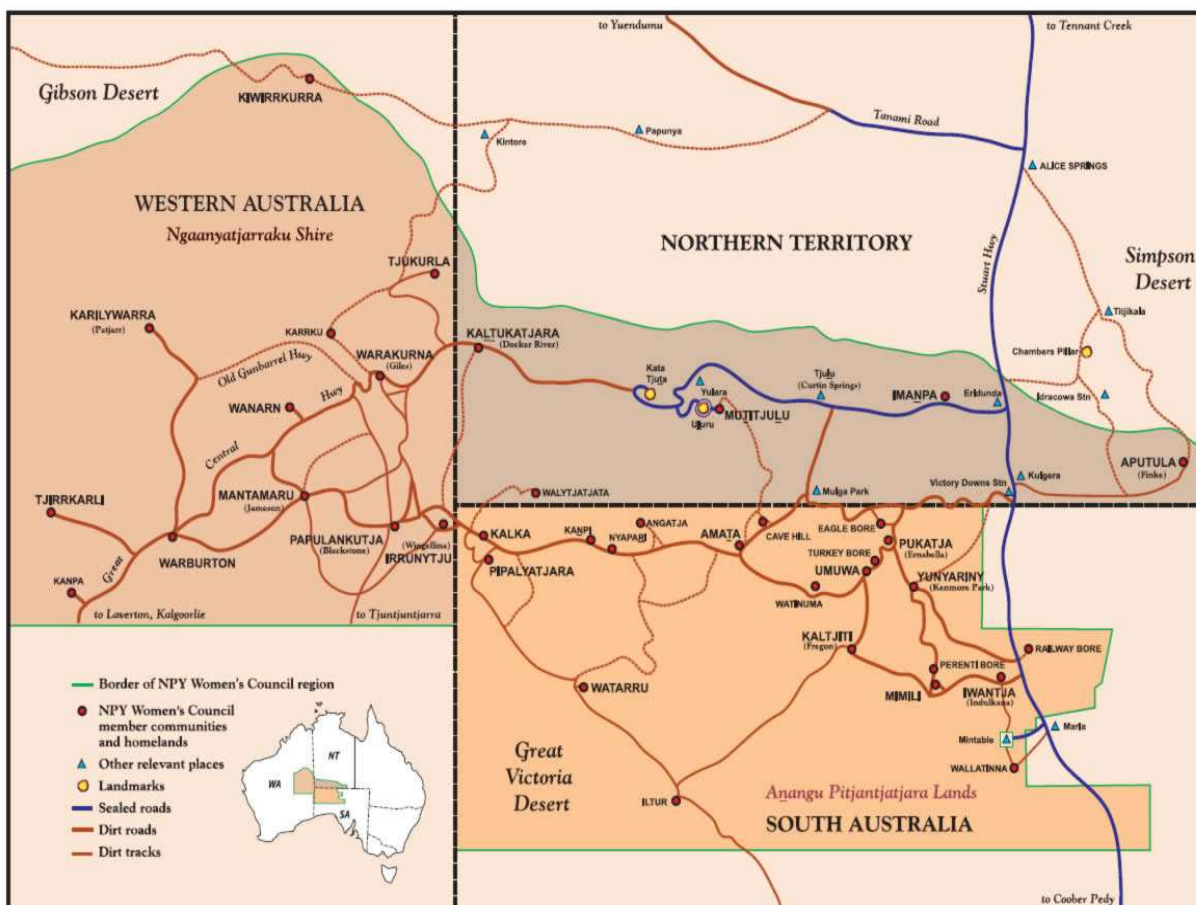
The remoteness of the NPY Lands, combined with the vast geographical distances between communities, creates a unique set of challenges and complexities, including extreme isolation and difficulties accessing appropriate and effective services.

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[1] For the purposes of Empowered Communities, the NPY region includes Alice Springs insofar as it is the regional centre providing services to the Anangu and Yarnangu of the NPY Lands communities

[2] Hereafter referred to collectively as Anangu or Anangu-tjuta

Under the leadership of NPY Women's Council, an aboriginal women's organisation established in 1980, seven regional aboriginal organisations have been working together to explore and support the implementation of Empowered Communities (EC) in the NPY region.

These organisations are:
1) APY Art Centre Collective
2) Central Land Council (CLC)
3) Mai Wiru Regional Stores Council Aboriginal Corporation (Mai Wiru)
4) Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC)
5) Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC)
6) Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku (Purple House)
7) Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC).

Six of these organisations make up the **NPY EC Regional Steering Committee**.

In the NPY Lands, we know that when we work together from the ground up, "malparara" way (two-way learning between Anangu and non-Anangu), we see success.

The NPY EC Regional Development Roadmap guides Empowered Communities across the tri-state region setting out Anangu priorities, the EC journey, governance, how we work in partnership with Government, including through 'meeting places' or negotiating tables and forward planning. The Roadmap can be found at:
http://www.npyec.org.au/uploads/1/0/5/7/105789899/npy_regional_develop_roadmap_july_2020_web.pdf

A short video explains Empowered Communities in the NPY region:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70BxUVa77kc

EC Secretariat

Our regional implementation of an EC regional backbone organisation is referred to as the **Secretariat**. It is a key component of the EC implementation, supporting the Regional Steering Committee and working malparara way with Anangu communities, families and individuals to attain the Empowered Communities outcomes of Empowerment, Development and Productivity.

In the NPY region the Secretariat is focused on supporting the Empowered Communities Regional Steering Committee through:
- driving the Empowered Communities internal and external functions, including strategy, communications, community engagement, negotiation, co-design and delivery oversight and data functions with and on behalf of the Regional Steering Committee and all Anangu (Anangu-tjuta) of the NPY Lands;
- facilitating the collective success of this regional effort;
- working closely and collaboratively with our partners and a broad range of stakeholders; and
- serving as an active facilitator of change and public ambassador for Empowered Communities.

The focus for the Secretariat is to:

1. Guide vision and strategy
- ❖ Articulate and build a common understanding of the needs and priorities of the NPY region to inform the long-term Regional Development Agenda and Regional Investment Strategy. The current agenda is reflected in the NPY EC Regional Development Roadmap:

❖ Provide strategic guidance to develop the common agenda using independent subject matter expertise as necessary
  o involve those with experience (Indigenous families, individuals, communities, organisations), those with intent (sponsors supporting and driving change over the long term), and those who can assist with design of policy and initiatives (government, academia, service providers).
  o learn from best practice models across the eight regions, and beyond.
  o advocate for aligned policy.

2. Support aligned activities
❖ Coordinate and facilitate communication and collaboration.
❖ Engage and collaborate with governments to gain shared understanding of community needs/priorities and design appropriate responses.
❖ Convene partners and key external stakeholders (eg, Negotiation Table process).
❖ Guide new initiatives or collaborations (eg, identify 'quick wins', need for design labs to crunch hard issues, new opt-in partners).
❖ Seek opportunities for alignment with other efforts in the region (eg, with those service provider organisations outside Empowered Communities who play important roles in support of Indigenous people).
❖ Provide technical assistance (eg, identify issues/concerns for Negotiation Tables, assist with development of agendas, develop materials for meetings and undertake follow up actions and next steps, manage logistics).
❖ Support ongoing capacity development of opt-in organisations.
❖ Ensure ongoing active collaboration between Empowered Communities regions to share learnings and best practice.

3. Establish shared measurement practices
❖ Access a range of population and investment data and service information to assist in developing an accurate picture of community needs and priorities, cross-referenced with community input.
❖ Analyse, interpret and report data for rapid feedback to Indigenous and government partners, consistent with the adaptive practice 'learn as you go' approach.
❖ Develop shared measurement systems and support building partners' evidence/data usage capacity and maturity.

4. Build community consensus and commitment
❖ Create a sense of urgency and articulate a call to action across the region.
❖ Support opt-in organisation engagement activities to build cohesiveness as a leadership group focused on the interests of Indigenous people across the region, rather than the interests of organisations.
❖ Understand the views of the broader community and manage external communications across the region.

5. Prioritise funding
❖ Facilitate and manage Joint or Shared Decision-making with Kulintja Kutju.
❖ Prioritise and align public and private regional funding and investment to support regional and secretariat goals.

❖ Identify areas of duplication, inefficiency, unnecessary red tape to achieve greater productivity from existing resources and opportunities in the region.
❖ Engage with governments beyond an applicant-funder (transactional) model to collaborate on an understanding of community priority/need and opportunities to address it.
❖ Support Indigenous and government partners to share 'risk' around local investment against a background of competing local priorities and interests.
❖ Establish clear lines of accountability downwards, to Indigenous people in the region, as well as upwards, to investors/funders.

Guiding Principles of the Secretariat

The following principles guide the culture of the Secretariat and inform the behaviour and conduct of all Secretariat personnel. The principles are:

- Provision and development of visionary, adaptive leadership, modelling Empowered Communities' guiding principles and values at all times and fostering a regional operating model that consistently reflects these principles and values;
- Developing, coaching and mentoring all Empowered Communities colleagues, team members, partners and other interested stakeholders to understand, support and champion the EC design and delivery as a pathway to Anangu empowerment;
- Delivering a high performing, adaptive operational Secretariat (backbone) function and organisation
- Becoming/being a recognised and acknowledged champion for Regional Empowerment, Development and Productivity on behalf of the NPY EC Regional Steering Committee and Anangu-tjuta
- Consistent and committed support for the Empowered Communities design principle of **subsidiarity** by continually working with all participants to ensure the ongoing investment in support of capability and capacity development for Anangu; always with the goal to strengthen and support Anangu control over identification, design, delivery and management of regionally prioritised outcomes
- Championing a culture that balances:
  1. strategic thinking and adaptive practice focussed on evidence based design, results based delivery and data driven assessment and management; with
  2. a genuine acknowledgement and appropriate consideration of the legitimate community, family and individual lived experience of issues, approaches and outcomes;
- Acknowledged by Anangu as a "malpa" who understands the value of relationship and "wiru" (proper) way engagement and ensures that this understanding underpins all Empowered Communities strategy, planning and delivery;
- Maintaining understanding of and focus on the 3-way (tri-state) regional EC priorities, in conjunction with the current cultural, political and/or implementation challenges and developing comprehensive solutions to address the challenges, in consultation and collaboration with the Regional Steering Committee and other key stakeholders and interested parties;
- Modelling strong, consistent and robust organisational governance including:
  o transparent and strategic financial management;
  o genuine and productive engagement with stakeholders at all levels;
  o integrity in all plans and actions; and
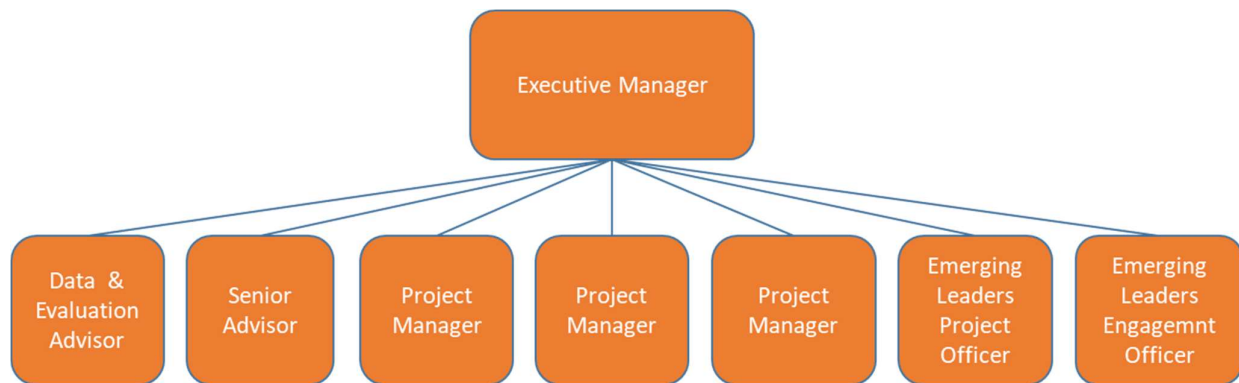 o congruency at all times between words and deeds.

- Building and managing key strategic relationships in the region including Commonwealth, State and local governments, Corporates, NGOs, regional and local businesses to better support the Empowered Communities initiative through understanding, support and ultimately shared advocacy.
- Working collaboratively with the other EC regions and any central EC structures or representatives, to support and progress knowledge sharing and aligned strategy and action between the regions as well as a sustained and strong focus on the national EC agenda.

Secretariat Structure and Reporting Relationships

The NPY EC Secretariat Executive Manager reports to the NPY Region EC Regional Steering Committee (RSC), with day to day engagement, advice, guidance and support from the NPY EC RSC co-chairs.

Reflecting the initial auspicing of the NPY EC Secretariat by NPY Women's Council (NPYWC), the Executive Manager works closely and collaboratively with the NPYWC Chief Executive Officer (who is also one of the RSC Co-Chairs), around the day to day operation of the Secretariat, especially with regard to the Secretariat's operation within the Women's Council organisational structures.

The Team structure for the Secretariat is:

Executive Manager
- Data & Evaluation Advisor
- Senior Advisor
- Project Manager
- Project Manager
- Project Manager
- Emerging Leaders Project Officer
- Emerging Leaders Engagemnt Officer

This organisational structure is subject to change as the Empowered Communities process evolves.

NPY EC First Priority Projects

The NPY EC Secretariat has carriage of a number of Regional First Priority Projects on behalf of the NPY EC Regional Steering committee.

While there is considerable and ongoing collaboration and support across the team, individual team members have primary responsibility for and carriage of the progress for one or more these First Priority Projects.

The current NPY EC First Priority Projects in progress are:

1) NPY Emerging Leaders program:
2) School to Work (or further study) Transition Support
3) Support for Anangu Workers
4) Regional Funding and Procurement – (Kulintja Kutju Joint Decision-making on IAS funding)
5) Kaltjiti (Fregon) Community School upgrade support

Key Definitions:

Active learning:

Active learning requires participants to actively engage rather than just passively listening, it can involve activities, such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving that promote analysis, synthesis and evaluation of situations, issues or opportunities.

Collaboration, cooperative learning, problem-based learning and the use of case studies and simulations are some approaches that promote active learning.

Active learning will be a critical component of success for the NPY EC Secretariat and for our regional Empowered Communities collaboration. The Secretariat will use, model and promote an active learning approach in all our work.

For a short synopsis of the components and value of active learning refer to the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwxmPrBdIcQ

Adaptive practice:

Adaptive practice (or adaptive leadership/learning) refers to an approach to addressing significant social and cultural issues where the challenge is complex, the solutions are unknown, the results are unpredictable, the context is volatile and stakeholders may not be on the same page.

These complex problems are difficult to frame, and the cause and effect relationships are unclear. There are often diverse stakeholders, each with a different or unique experience and the characteristics & dynamics of the issue continue to evolve without any obvious right or wrong set of solutions, and there are little or no existing, objective measures of success.

Adaptive practice faces into this complexity and the discomfort for stakeholders that generally comes with seeking to understand and resolve the complexity and navigate a path to positive or transformational outcomes.

Core to adaptive practice are three activities:
1. Evidence based & data driven: Observing events and patterns, taking in this information as data without forming early judgements or making pre-emptive assumptions about the data's meaning;
2. Systematic Evaluation and Analysis: Tentatively interpreting observations by developing multiple hypotheses about what is really going on, and at the same time, recognising that hypotheses are simply that - hypotheses; and
3. Iterative and Evolving Action: Designing interventions based on your observations and interpretations in order to make progress on the adaptive challenge, with a focus on learning, testing and being prepared to modify the approach based on further evidence and outcomes.

For some further insight on the value of understanding and navigating complexity, please refer to: http://www.ted.com/talks/eric_berlow_how_complexity_leads_to_simplicity?language=en

Subsidiarity:
Holds that authority for deciding or acting should rest as close as possible to the people affected by the decision or act. This means that primary human responsibilities should rest with individuals and families. Where some action or decision necessarily transcends the individual, authority must remain at the lowest appropriate level—that is, as close as possible to the individual.

For more information on subsidiarity as it applies to Empowered Communities refer to the EC Design report (page 22) (http://empoweredcommunities.org.au/about/report.aspx)

Our work is led by Anangu and grounded in ◊ Tjukurpa ◊ Walytja ◊ Manta ◊ Wangka

Systems thinking:

Systems thinking is a holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way that a system's constituent parts interrelate and how systems work over time and within the context of larger systems. The systems thinking approach contrasts with traditional analysis, which studies systems by breaking them down into their separate elements. Systems thinking can be used in any area of research and has been applied to the study of medical, environmental, political, economic, human resources, and educational systems, among many others.

For some further insight into the application and value of systems thinking please refer to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vojPksdbtI

Monitoring Evaluation Learning and Adaptation (MELA)

Every program or policy initiated under Empowered Communities represents an investment of money, time and emotion and should be monitored and evaluated, learned from and constantly adapted for success.

Empowered Communities is committed to the integration and embedding of systematic monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaptation in all our work. As a facilitator of change, the EC Secretariat is a key agent for educating, influencing and support stakeholders across the region in the value, process and implementation of comprehensive MELA plans and activities in all our EC work.

- Monitoring is the measurement of change.
- Evaluation is working out what the change means.
- Learning is the analysis of both the level of change and the effectiveness of the approach.
- Adaptation is the adjustment to the program, based on evaluation, to ensure the outcomes (or better) will be achieved.