



Aboriginal control and NGO partnerships in tough times

The APONT Principles and some insights
on partnerships from the CLC's
Community Development Program

APONT

- APONT members are Aboriginal organisations governed by Aboriginal boards and generally with majority Aboriginal staff.
- APONT members have different mandates and approaches to supporting Aboriginal development in the NT: Land Councils, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, Aboriginal Legal Aid Services.
- BUT the work of all APONT partners is underpinned by effective Aboriginal **involvement** and **control in:**
 - **Planning, decision-making, implementation and M and E.**

Why Aboriginal involvement and control?

1. UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People
Article 23: Economic and Social Development – Indigenous peoples have the right to determine priorities and strategies for their development. They should be involved in determining health, housing and other economic and social programs and, as far as possible, administer these program through their own organisations.
2. International experience highlights local involvement, ownership and control as critical to effective development.
3. Social determinants of health literature shows the health benefits of people exercising control.

APONT Principles - Background

- Effective involvement and control occurs when Aboriginal people have responsibility and capacity.
- Well-managed, community controlled Aboriginal organisations have long effectively delivered services and undertaken development work in the NT.
- Unique strengths: legitimacy and accountability, strong relationships, understanding of community needs, cultural competence, permanent presence.

APONT Principles - Background

- Changes in Government policy and increasing government trend to fund non-Aboriginal NGOs > decline in Aboriginal organisations.
- APONT's view is that Aboriginal orgs are best placed to deliver but where they aren't operating or have limited capacity, there's a role for NGOs in assisting the development of Aboriginal organisations.
- APO NT organised a forum with NGOs in February 2013; 27 NGOs and 6 Aboriginal peak orgs workshopped a set of draft Partnership Principles.
- Principles were launched in October 2013 and to date 18 non-Aboriginal NGOs have endorsed them.

APONT Principles

Capacity – consider own capacity, recognise existing Aboriginal capacity, research thoroughly before going in.

Partnerships – where Aboriginal orgs exist partnership based on building Aboriginal capacity and control (with clear exit strategy).

Aboriginal-led development – recognise and support existing development practice and cultural competency.

Control – Aboriginal orgs must be in control, not just consulted.

Evaluation and Accountability – Develop robust frameworks and processes with Aboriginal orgs and communities.

APONT Principles and the NGO Steering Committee

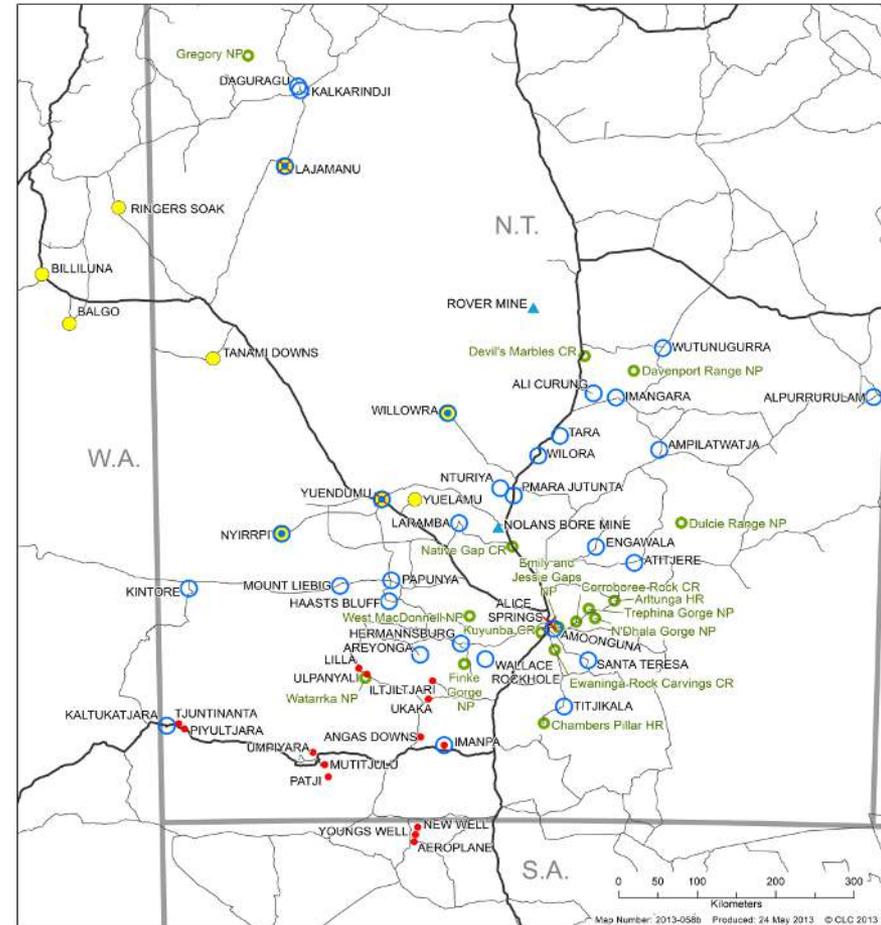
- Steering Committee - reps from NGOs/APONT working to promote and implement the Principles.
- Two forums held.
- ACOSS drawing on them in its Principles for a Partnership-centred approach for NGOs:
 - but focus seems to be on Aboriginal participation, consultation and employment, not control.
- Ongoing work to develop guidelines and monitoring systems plus promote Govt support.

IAS Tendering Process

- Attempt to reduce administrative burden and compliance requirements welcomed.
- But a missed opportunity for the Commonwealth to put the APONT NGO Principles into practice.
 - Competitive tendering favours large NGOs and universities, not experienced local Aboriginal orgs.
 - IAS priorities set by govt with limited Indigenous input.
 - Doesn't ensure funding directed to Aboriginal controlled service provision.
 - Support for Aboriginal organisational governance and capacity development not built in.
- 45% of orgs funded in NT are Aboriginal, but we don't know how much they got.
- Of the other 55% some will have existing relationships and/or be partnering with Aboriginal orgs, there's likely to be some with little expertise in delivering services to Aboriginal people.

CLC CD Program

- Now in it's 10th year, 35+ communities involved.
- 6 major regional CD projects with over 300 initiatives planned and funded by Aboriginal groups.
- Since 2005 CLC constituents have spent **over \$25 million** of their rent/royalty/affected area payments on community benefit projects.
- CLC's constituents increasingly directing **their own significant money** to projects.



Locations of 2013 CLC Community Development Projects

- Uluru Rent Money Community Development Project
- Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT)
- × Tanami Dialysis Support Service Project
- Granites Mine Affected Area Community Development Project
- NT Parks Rent Money Community Development Project
- Community Lease Money Project
- ▲ Future Community Development Project



CD Program Goal

To support Aboriginal people to be strong/resilient and to live well in the Aboriginal world and mainstream Australian society.

Objectives

1. Maximise Aboriginal engagement and control.
2. Generate social, cultural and economic outcomes.
3. Build an evidence base for the CLC's CD approach.
4. Share lessons learned on innovations and CD best practice.



CLC CD Strategies

1. Comprehensive participatory processes facilitated by staff skilled in intercultural development.
2. Starting with Aboriginal assets and ensuring Aboriginal control at all levels of decision-making.
3. Strengthening good governance and effective leadership, including through 90 member Council.
4. Partnerships with NGOs, government and corporates, including leveraging additional resources.
5. Monitoring and evaluation to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.



Mutitjulu Pool Project



- Community prioritised pool in 2006 under URM Project.
- 2007 – 2013 CLC supported Muti Working Group (MWG) to plan pool, meet Parks' requirements and secure co-funding.
- Pool opened in 2013 with design/construction project managed by CAT Projects.
- Challenge to find the right org to run the pool, with 2 local Aboriginal orgs asked to run it, a non-Aboriginal NGO realising late in the day they lacked capacity, CAT Projects agreeing to take it on if necessary.
- National tender process saw Casa Leisure recommended by CLC/CAT panel and approved by the MWG.
- CASA contracted by CLC to operate the pool for 5 years.

Mutitjulu Pool Project

- 3-way partnership between MWG, CLC and CASA highly successful:
 - Aboriginal-led and controlled with leaders actively engaged and accountability back to Aboriginal group as funders.
 - Roles and responsibilities clearly set out in funding agreement.
 - MWG as experts on Mutitjulu, CASA with technical pool capacity, CLC with governance and intercultural capacity.
 - CLC has used its relationships/knowledge to assist CASA develop cultural competence and get established (CASA willing to come in as learners).
 - Continuity in MWG and long-term, CD focused staff in CLC/CASA.
 - Resolving issues early with CLC as facilitator between community and CASA.
 - Regular review at MWG meetings.
- Recent independent monitoring of the pool project and CASA shows high levels of community satisfaction.
- A meeting in Muti this week confirmed the pool as top priority for future funding.

Observations on partnerships in the CD Program

- Having control and capacity to determine priorities and partners as important as outcomes.
- Significant majority of partners are Aboriginal orgs.
- Aboriginal orgs known and trusted, legitimate, community-based, strong on employment, not going anywhere.
- Some partnerships between Aboriginal orgs to build capacity.
- Non-Aboriginal orgs that are chosen almost always known/operating in communities.
- Aboriginal orgs can broker partnerships which work where all parties committed to Aboriginal decision-making and orgs come in willing to learn.



Summary

- Aboriginal people and their organisations want control of their development and services because that's most effective.
- Aboriginal orgs have many strengths, but some need support from NGOs.
- NGOs have a role to play and the APONT principles are an attempt to frame the nature of the relationship > not a set of rules but an enabling tool.