

NPY Women's Council
Background

NPYWC was formed in 1980. The push for a separate women's forum came about during the South Australian Pitjantjatjara Land Rights struggle of the late 1970s. During consultations over land rights many women felt that their views were not being taken into account, so they established their own organisation. Its region covers 350,000 square kilometres of the remote tri-State cross-border area of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Anangu and Yarnangu (Aboriginal people) living on the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands (Western Desert language region) share strong cultural and family affiliations. What began as an advocacy organisation is now also a major provider of human services in the region, in essence working to address the needs that clinical health services cannot, and that government agencies do not directly provide in this remote area. NPYWC has taken this direction because of the glaring needs that exist in member communities

NPYWC represents women in the region, which has an over-all population of around 6000. The organisation is driven by its members' determination to improve the quality of life for families in the region. Its existence gives members an avenue for participation in the decision-making processes that affect them and their families. It is a permanent forum where they are able to raise issues and make their opinions and decisions known. It also provides opportunities for Anangu to learn, share knowledge and keep informed about relevant issues. NPYWC's success is largely due to its capacity to provide a decision-making process that is driven by Anangu. One of the major advantages of its existence has been, and remains, the development over time of members' ability to consider and analyse policy issues, deal with government agencies and advocate on their own behalf.

NPYWC's Constitutional objectives are to:-

- Provide a forum for Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara women to discuss their concerns;
- Promote women's membership of and participation in community councils, ATSIC Regional Councils and other organisations;
- Help individual women achieve further training, education and employment;
- Assist in the establishment of appropriate health, education, cultural, artistic and social services;
- Promote and support the achievements and authority of women;
- Distribute information about issues of importance to women;
- Promote and encourage women's Law and Culture.

NPYWC has its administrative office in the main regional town of Alice Springs, located within the Pitjantjatjara Council Resource Centre, along with Nganampa Health Council Inc. and the Pitjantjatjara Council Inc. Accounting Service. NPYWC is

the largest tenant. Regional offices are located at Umuwa in SA and in Wingellina, WA.

Governance

An executive committee comprising a Chairwoman, Vice-Chairwoman and ten executive members is elected at the Annual General Meeting. The executive committee meets five times a year to discuss the Council's programs and priorities. All members are invited to attend three general meetings held in bush settings each year to hear reports from project workers and provide referrals, responses to programs and policy direction. This ensures that the Council and staff are following NPYWC policy and addressing the needs of members and their families. In early 2005, NPYWC Executive and staff have collaborated with the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations to design and run a governance training course that is specifically geared to NPYWC's members' needs and their literacy and educational levels.

NPYWC Projects and funding

NPYWC currently operates with a budget of nearly \$4M per annum, from a wide variety of agencies. It employs at present more than thirty staff, the majority full-time, several part-time, a couple on a casual basis and occasional short-term contract staff for specific research or other projects. Projects operate where at all possible, funding and recruiting permitting, with a team consisting of a (usually non-Aboriginal) staff member with formal professional qualifications and an Anangu project worker who is in most, but not all instances employed for her language skills, community knowledge and contacts and cultural knowledge. Following is a brief summary of funding sources:

- Aged Care Support (on AP Lands SA only): SA DHS HACC program including Tjilpi Pampa (Old People's) Festival;
- Aged Advocacy : Tjilpi Pampa Tjutaku Wangkantjaki (Talking up for Old People to distinguish from above): Cth. Health & Ageing; to June 06 only.
- Central Australian Cross-Border Carer Respite Centre and Service: Cth. Health & Ageing
- Disability Advocacy: Cth. F&CS
- Tri-state Disability Service: for case management across region: NT DHACS, SA Families and Communities, WA DSC: tri-state agreement from July 05.
- Emotional and Social Well-being: Cth. Health & Ageing (OATSIH)
- Ngangkari (Traditional Healers) Program: SA Health Dep't.
- Domestic Violence Service: Cth. SAAP, through SA; Department Com. Development & Department Justice WA Cth A-G's agreement pending; Cth. F&CS agreement pending.

- Child (Nutrition) Program: Cth. Health & Ageing, through OATSIH and the Telstra Foundation Cth. F&CS 'Invest to Grow' agreement 3.5 years from March 05.
 - Youth program: Cth. Health & Ageing through National Illicit Drugs (NIDS) funding; and Cth. F&CS Re-connect program;
 - Emergency Relief Program – Cth. F&CS and Nganampa Health Council Inc.
 - The Tjanpi (Basket) enterprise: income from sales and occasional grants from a number of sources that have included Aust. Council, Arts SA, WA & NT, Gordon Darling Foundation, NT Dep' t. Trade and Asian Relations, ATSI/ICC (DCITA)
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- Law and Culture annual meeting: currently Australia Council & previously ATSI Pt. Augusta & various, including philanthropic foundations.
 - Brokerage funding urgent short and, increasingly, long-term care plans for people with disabilities including brain injuries and frail aged clients through SA Families & Communities, Local Areas Co-ordination NT and our Commonwealth Carer Respite brokerage fund;
 - Kungka Career conference aimed at presenting education and work options to girls and young women.
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- Insufficient core operational funding; from Cth. Health & Ageing 'Consultation & co-ordination' ; ongoing, but annual agreements; ATSI then ATSI now Cth. Departments through ICC: annual funding for operations and some other areas.
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Publications

NPY Women's Council 10-Year Book, NPYWC, 1990.

"Looking After Children Grandmothers' Way", NPYWC, 1991.

"They Might Have to Drag Me Like a Bullock," on the care needs of the aged, NPYWC, 1995.

Women's Centres Book – "Nganana Rawangka Alatji Warkaripai; We Have Been Doing This Work for a Long Time", NPYWC, 1999.

"Tjunga Nyinapai/Being Together: Our work with the frail aged and disabled people and their families." NPY Women's Council Video, internal production, 2000

"Minymaku Way" SBS Film Production documenting the work of NPYWC, 2001

"Ngangkari Work – Anangu Way: traditional healers of Central Australia," NPYWC publication documenting the work and life stories of various ngangkari (traditional healers), 2003

Awards:

- "National Violence Prevention Award" , NPYWC Domestic Violence Service 1994 & 1995;
- "Excellence in Health Promotion" for the Nutrition Project, 1997. Awarded by Living Health SA;

- “Best Practice Award” for the Nutrition Project, 1997. Awarded by OATSIH;
- “An Outstanding Contribution to Australian Culture” for the Kungka Career Conference, 1999. Awarded by the Centre for Australian Cultural Studies Canberra;
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Award to NPY Women’s Council in the Community Sector, 2000;
- Special Mention for the Women’s Centres Book – “Nganana Rawangka Alatji Warkaripai; We Have Been Doing This Work for a Long Time”, 2000. Awarded by the Centre for Australian Cultural Studies Canberra;

- The Australian Council for Children and Parenting (ACCAP) National Award for the Prevention of Child Abuse in Regional and Remote Areas, Melbourne, Nov. 2001, jointly to NPYWC Domestic Violence Service and Nutrition Project.
- Special Mention for “Ngangkari Work – Anangu Way: traditional healers of Central Australia,” Centre for Australian Cultural Studies, Canberra, 2004 Awards; February 2005.

Notable Achievements and activities:

- Negotiations with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Curtin Springs Roadhouse to successfully obtain a Special Measures Certificate to prohibit the sale of alcohol, 1997; Certificate current;
- Co-ordination of 330 Aboriginal women to perform in the Sydney 2000 Olympics Opening Ceremony;
- Development of innovative community development models of service delivery such as the Petrol Sniffing Support Project (now Young People’s Project);
- National Travelling Exhibition of Ngaanyatjarra Manguri Women’s Weaving; continuing; currently en route from Warburton in WA to the Araluen Centre in Alice Springs.;
- Extensive participation in SA Coronial inquest 2002, into the deaths of three petrol sniffers from the AP Lands, including separate legal representation for NPYWC, submissions, assistance to Coroner’s office in relation to expert and other witnesses, dissemination of information by radio during inquiry at Umuwa, May-June 2002, and afterwards by translation and distribution of findings; financial assistance by way of grant from Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation;
- Separate legal representation at a second SA Coronial inquest November-December 2004, involving similar issues; grant from Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation and Pilot Light Foundation Working Dog Productions);
- Active participation in the Cross-Border Reference Group on Volatile Substance Misuse; co-ordinated by Cth. Dep’t. Health & Ageing

- Securing of financial assistance from Australia Council and release of staff member to accompany and assist members of Pitjantjatjara Choir to perform at Adelaide Festival, Feb.-Mar. 2004;
 - Discrimination complaint to HREOC, on behalf of two Ngaanyatjarra families, with pro-bono assistance, as part of ongoing efforts to have two young men, long-term residents of institutionalised accommodation, re-located from a mental health facility in Perth, to secure supported care in Alice Springs, in order that their families may have some ease of contact with them and vice versa; conciliation meeting Sept. 03; agreement executed in 2004 by NPYWC, NT & WA Governments to progress matter.
 - Membership on Mutitjulu Tjunga Waarkaripayi (working together) whole of government project; membership of NT Family and Community Services Ministerial Advisory Committee; NPYWC DV Service Manager is also Chair of NT Chief Minister's Aboriginal and Family Violence Advisory Council.
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- Systemic advocacy and support for Indigenous women's and family issues at local and national levels.

The value of NPYWC

1. NPYWC supports a strong role for women in the communities, particularly through the delivery of services that involve the employment of Anangu women, including in: Respite for Carers, Frail and Aged Care plans and advocacy, Disability Advocacy and case management, Emotional and Social Well-being, Child Nutrition education and Young People's programs aimed at early intervention for kids at risk of, or sniffing, petrol. The Tjanpi (Jarn-pee) (basket) project is highly successful in providing a small income to more than 200 women who are basket-weavers in the region¹.
2. The organisation has a very good record of representing and empowering Aboriginal women in the Western Desert cross-border region. NPYWC supports women's efforts to have some control and choice, and the possibility of being able to establish life-styles that are free from violence. The award-winning but very stretched DV Service, for example, has operated for ten years, is unique and highly effective, and is recognised as such by the SA Dep't Human Services which provides funding (through the Cth. SAAP), and all three relevant police services.
3. NPYWC is now a major service delivery organisation in the tri-state region, including the AP and Ngaanyatjarra Lands, providing services in remote areas that government agencies do not deliver directly. In a nutshell, it does work that is normally the responsibility of the state in remote areas, and often at a much

¹ although it continually struggles to attain enough funding to allow it to become self-sufficient.

lower cost than governments would incur. Apart from the primary healthcare services in the region, NPYWC is the main provider of human services.

4. All NPYWC project work is arduous and involves working with clients who often have multiple problems, for example, domestic violence, child assault and substance misuse; acquired brain injury and a serious physical disability; dementia and frailty due to age and the responsibility of caring for an adult son or daughter with acquired brain injury (ABI), most commonly from sniffing petrol. In addition, many communities are highly dysfunctional and violent and lack a permanent police presence. Extensive travel is part of the work, along with advocacy and negotiation with funding agencies. We are fortunate to have many highly skilled and dedicated employees.

5. NPYWC is unique in its tri-state membership and operation. This however presents a major difficulty when it comes to funding. NPYWC has used limited resources very efficiently by administering services in the cross-border region. NPYWC works collaboratively with other Aboriginal organisations, including clinical health services, to ensure there is no duplication of services.

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