



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 2016 - 2020











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“Nobody tells us what to do, we make our own decisions”.  
(Aboriginal CD Committee member, 2012\*)

\* All quotes are taken from monitoring and evaluation reports referenced at p.28 of this document.



# OVERVIEW



The Central Land Council (CLC) is a statutory authority under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* and a Native Title Representative Body under the *Native Title Act 1993*. It is a leading Aboriginal advocacy agency with 40 years' experience engaging with Aboriginal people and assisting them to get their land back. The CLC is now supporting Aboriginal groups to translate their land and native title rights into development outcomes.

The CLC is supporting Aboriginal development in the challenging Central Australian environment. External factors, particularly the ongoing disadvantage and marginalisation of many Aboriginal people, combined with the continued erosion of Aboriginal voice, power and control over community affairs, impacts on the capacity of Aboriginal people and their organisations to achieve development outcomes. Aware of these challenges, in 2005 the CLC embarked on a major new area of work in setting up a Community Development (CD) program to support transformational development with social, cultural and economic outcomes.



An earlier version of this Framework was endorsed by the CLC Executive in 2009 to inform the then new CD program and to promote the systematic application of a CD approach by CLC staff more generally. A growing body of evidence shows that the CLC's CD approach as set out in the 2009 Framework is effective (Roche and Ensor, 2014; Kelly, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). One of the strongest signs of this is the rapid growth of the CD program as Aboriginal groups increasingly choose to drive their own development through the CLC CD process.

This updated CLC CD Framework continues to draw on the literature and incorporates lessons the CLC has learnt in establishing its CD program over the last decade. It defines community development and related key concepts, as well as CLC CD principles. These principles are applied by staff from across the organisation. It also sets out the process used by the CD program, as well as the program's goal, objectives and strategies. While this detail applies to the CD Program, other CLC staff involved in development roles, as well as other development agencies supporting Aboriginal-driven development, are encouraged to consider and trial its application. The CLC CD Framework is accompanied by a CLC CD Toolkit which includes a range of practical resources.







WETT painting in progress



CONTEXT





Jonathan Wickham, Robin Morton and Matthew Ladd digging irrigation trenches at Imangara





“Working group decide what they want to make a better community. Everyone talks and shares ideas and decides on something and makes it happen. There are a lot of things we’ve been doing. It is a good experience working in groups.”  
(Aboriginal community member, 2015)

Andrew Alice working on the house at Urrermerne

## The Central Land Council Context

The *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and the *Native Title Act 1993* provide a strong foundation for sustainable development in the CLC region through the legal recognition of land rights and native title. The CLC Corporate Plan 2015-19 sets out the organisation’s commitment to Aboriginal development:

*The CLC aims to contribute to improving the lives and futures of its Aboriginal constituents through achieving sustainable change that reduces the level of Aboriginal disadvantage in Central Australia. The CLC’s approach to sustainable development is based on an integrated and strengths-based strategy of building economic, social and cultural capital. (pg.11)*

Successive CLC planning processes have identified supporting Aboriginal community development and governance arrangements as one strategy to promote the development of strong and healthy Aboriginal groups and communities. The organisation brings significant capacity to this initiative including: strong Aboriginal organisational governance and leadership; extensive experience in consultation, participatory planning; and, supporting informed decision-making and effective intercultural work. The CLC now also has a decade of experience in setting up and running its CD Program, involving more than 35 Aboriginal communities across the region.





## The broader central australian context

Aboriginal Central Australians continue to be an extremely disadvantaged group in terms of key social, economic and health indicators. Remoteness, diversity and the intercultural context create inherent development challenges. The Indigenous policy frameworks of the Commonwealth and Northern Territory (NT) Governments over the last decade have added to these challenges by seriously eroding the power and control of Aboriginal Central Australians over community matters important to them (Roche and Ensor, 2014, p.105). Further, many government initiatives continue to be delivered from the top down, often by under-resourced agencies to which they have been outsourced, leaving governments disengaged from communities and lacking implementation capacity.





“Land Council was our shield through Land Rights. We had land claim. Shield was like a father, was looking after us. We had a struggle with Intervention. They took our rights, living conditions. They was the ones controlling us from Canberra. I’m really not happy with it.”

(Aboriginal community member, 2014)



# Community Development work in Aboriginal Australia

Over the past 40 years community development approaches have been applied in Aboriginal Australian communities with varied success (Morley, 2015). Often initiatives are established using CD rhetoric of empowering disadvantaged communities to address their issues, but decision-making remains centralised, communities are not empowered and outcomes are not sustained (Kenny, 1996; Petersen 1994; Mowbray 1995; Wass 2000). Even serious attempts to apply CD approaches are not always successful due to particular complexities in Aboriginal settings, which differ from disadvantaged communities in 'developing world' settings. The experience of Aboriginal Australians is consistent with Indigenous groups in colonised, wealthy Western economies and creates particular challenges.

Some of these are: routine marginalisation and disempowerment can reduce motivation to participate (Hunt 2005); the recent establishment of many remote Aboriginal 'communities', which are often characterised by competing interest and conflicts, and in which individual autonomy is highly valued and responsibility to kin critically important (Hunt, 2005); and, the complex and highly institutional and legal Australian context, together with the sheer number of government and other agencies operating in Aboriginal communities. In addition, entrenched power inequalities can make it difficult for non-Aboriginal CD workers to play a facilitative rather than directive role (Campbell et al 2005).

The CLC's experience is that while these challenges are evident, it is possible to apply a CD approach successfully in this region. Five key factors contributing to the CLC CD program's success are described in detail elsewhere (Hunt and Campbell, 2016) and can be summarised as:

1. Aboriginal leadership of the program, both by the CLC itself as an Aboriginal governed organisation and by Aboriginal constituents, willing to drive change.
2. Development and refinement of locally appropriate governance structures that are culturally legitimate, effective in contemporary circumstances and incorporate regional and local decision-making.
3. Appropriate planning processes that are a good fit and can be adapted and extended over time.
4. Effective facilitation of governance groups by capable outsiders who can act as change agents to facilitate informed and inclusive planning and decision-making, focused on sustainable development.
5. An overarching commitment to action, reflection and adaptation, based on negotiation between the Aboriginal participants and CD staff facilitating the approach.







“We all got involved. Women talked about their plan for women and men for men, and then we got together to make a plan for younger men. Older people were involved. They all talked to younger ones – they were all happy about that.”

(Aboriginal CD working group member, 2015)





A man wearing a yellow high-visibility shirt and a wide-brimmed hat is using a teal Makita jigsaw to cut a blue plastic barrel. He is standing in front of a light blue wall with a window that has a metal mesh screen. Another person is partially visible in the background, also working on a barrel. The scene appears to be outdoors or in a semi-enclosed area.

“We are working as a team for this community. We think about ‘what’s better for this place?’ We are trying to get a town hall and basketball stadium for kids. We need projects for kids. We older ones got to look after younger kids.”

(Aboriginal CD working group member, 2015)



# THE CLC'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH





## Our definition of Community Development

For the CLC 'community development' is a way of working that involves a set of principles and a specific process that builds Aboriginal ownership and control and strengthens groups or communities through the achievement of their own social, cultural, environmental and economic objectives. 'Community' refers to people who have a common connection - through shared identity, concerns or geographical location - but who as a group are not homogenous and have a degree of social stratification, economic inequalities and diversity of interests. Community development focuses on genuine, inclusive decision-making and a planning process that promotes the inclusion of the less powerful and the disadvantaged.

The CLC understands CD as being a way to support Aboriginal people to drive positive social change that transforms their lives now and lasts into the future. The organisation is clear that it is not simply about community engagement, project management, building infrastructure or - under the CD Program - the effective administration of Aboriginal people's income. While these may be elements or outputs of a CD approach, the fundamental focus is on the empowerment and development of Aboriginal people and groups. Ultimately it is about transformational development and self-determination.





Veronica Field interprets at the Kaltukatjara URM project planning community meeting July 2013

## Benefits of a CD approach

The CLC is using a community development approach to achieve the following outcomes:

### Capacity building

By participating in all steps of the process people build their individual and collective skills, knowledge and experience in governance and development. This assists groups to take ownership and control of the issues affecting them and to direct their own sustainable development.

### Increased community cohesion

Working together increases group/community cohesion as people become aware that they face common issues and work together to address them, including navigating different perspectives and working through group conflict.

### Empowerment

Community development builds stronger and more self-reliant individuals and groups that are better able to identify priorities and meet needs and therefore have greater control over their lives, communities and futures.

### Effective and sustainable initiatives

The active participation of community members in defining issues and using their local knowledge, skills and experience to develop initiatives to address them means these initiatives are more likely to be locally appropriate, effective and *sustainable*.



## Community Development principles

A number of principles or norms underpin CLC's community development work across the organisation.

### Social justice

supporting Aboriginal groups to assert their human rights and have their basic needs met.

### Self-reliance

building strong, resilient and independent regions, communities and outstations.

### Equity

changing power relations that marginalise people and sharing power within groups as well as between groups and outsiders so that outcomes accrue to all members of the group including the marginalised.

### Learning

recognising the skills, knowledge and expertise that people contribute and develop by taking action to address issues and drive change.

### Co-operation

working well together, based on mutual respect of diverse cultures and contributions.





CLC CD PROGRAM





## CD program goal

The goal of the CLC CD Program is that Aboriginal people will be strong and resilient and able to live well in both the remote Aboriginal context, by maintaining their identity, language, culture and connection to country, and mainstream Australian society, through better health, education, training and more employment. This goal reflects the dual aspirations the CLC has heard articulated by its constituents over many years.



# CD Program Process

Community development processes involve supporting groups of people to work together to drive their own transformational development. That is, development that results in real social, cultural and economic change. This means identifying common aspirations and issues, then planning and acting on their strategies for change. Drawing on information from elsewhere, forming partnerships with key stakeholders, securing resources, forming a group to

drive the action, and monitoring and evaluating are other key elements in a standard CD process.

Since 2005 the CLC has worked with Aboriginal people involved in the CD Program to adapt this process to suit the CLC's operating context so that lasting community benefit outcomes are maximised. The following process is consistently applied in the CD Program, which supports Aboriginal groups to set and achieve development objectives, generally using their own income from land use agreements.





A man with a weathered face, wearing a yellow and blue high-visibility shirt and a straw hat with a green band, is working on a chain-link fence. He is using a pair of red-handled pliers to adjust the fence. The background is a dry, red dirt landscape with sparse green vegetation under a clear blue sky.

*"We're making our own decisions about what we think is best for our community."*

*Andrew Wilyuka from Titjikala*



In many cases these steps are applied in an ongoing cyclical manner. Following monitoring and reflection at step eight the process recommences at step two, which may include adapting and improving the planning and decision-making approach. To be effective the CD process is facilitated by staff based on the CLC's CD principles, and with specific knowledge and skills. Most importantly:

- A strong commitment to **Aboriginal controlled development** and an awareness of power dynamics in intercultural work and within Aboriginal groups;
- The ability to establish and maintain **trusting relationships** as an 'outsider';
- Highly developed engagement and **facilitation skills**, including expertise working with groups in conflict;
- The capacity to **negotiate flexibly** with an Aboriginal group moving back and forth between planning steps where necessary, while also maintaining a consistent process; and,
- The **technical skills** that ensure effective project management and transparent communication of complex financial and project management information in a context of limited English literacy and numeracy.



Muritjuu swimming pool opening in 2013. Photo courtesy Steve Strike.





# CD Program Objectives and Strategies

The strategies below reflect those related to the CD Program in the CLC Corporate Plan 2015-19 under Goal 6 'Support Aboriginal people to develop strong communities, outstations and regions'. The annual CD Unit Operational Plan includes detailed actions for each strategy and tracks progress.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Maximise opportunities for Aboriginal engagement, ownership and control, particularly in relation to the management of resources that belong to them.

### Strategies

1. Set up and support locally appropriate Aboriginal governance arrangements that are culturally legitimate and effective in contemporary circumstances.
2. Support effective governance by Aboriginal groups in all aspects of the CLC CD process, with an emphasis on inclusive and informed decision-making.
3. Further develop the governance capacity of Aboriginal groups involved in the CD Program including in planning, financial and project management, and monitoring and evaluation.
4. Facilitate regular reflection on governance arrangements by participants and adapt and refine them as needed to suit each project and local context.





# OBJECTIVE 2

Generate service outcomes prioritised and valued by Aboriginal people and which benefit them, including social, cultural and economic outcomes.

## Strategies

1. Promote the use of land use agreement funds for community development initiatives that generate lasting community benefit.
2. Continue to apply the CD process to the CLC’s six major CD projects including:

Project	Activity
Uluru Rent Money project	Use rent paid to relevant traditional owners for a range of sustainable initiatives
Warlpiri Education and Training Trust project	Use mining royalties for sustainable education, training and health benefits
Tanami Dialysis Support Service project	Support dialysis facilities in remote communities using interest earned on invested mining royalties
Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation project	Support nine communities to apply ‘affected area’ monies from mining towards broad community benefit
NT Parks Rent Money project	Use rent paid to relevant traditional owners of 16 national parks for a range of sustainable initiatives
Community Lease Money project	Use rent paid for community leases for a diverse range of development activities in 31 communities

3. Where resources are available and with the support of Aboriginal governance groups, extend the CD process and apply it more comprehensively to these projects to facilitate the development of longer-term plans.
4. Ensure the effective project management of all approved sub-projects, including monitoring implementation by project partners in line with project funding agreements.
5. Continue to apply the CLC’s CD process until income is fully expended under the numerous smaller CD projects being run under the CD Program.

Ltyentye Apurte Ranger Malcolm Hayes burns off at Mt Undoolya





Andrew Glenn and Stanley Tilmouth work on the Aluyen laundry

# OBJECTIVE 3

Monitoring and evaluation to support continuous improvement and build an evidence base for the CLC's community development approach.

## Strategies

1. Continue annual independent monitoring of the CD Program to assess both the Aboriginal capacity outcomes generated by the CD process and the social, cultural and/or economic outcomes generated by specific initiatives.
2. Report back to Aboriginal participants on the key findings of annual monitoring reports.
3. Ensure external expert advice and assistance continues to inform the ongoing adaptation and improvement of the CD Program.
4. With input from the CLC's CD Reference Group, develop an action plan to further improve the CD program in response to key findings in each annual monitoring report.
5. Secure resources to undertake a second periodic evaluation of the CD Program.
6. Build on the existing monitoring and evaluation methodology by investing in further research on the impact and effectiveness of this work, including more data generation by, and feedback from, Aboriginal participants themselves.
7. Use this data to develop and model more holistic approaches to monitoring and evaluation of the CD Program.



# OBJECTIVE 4

Share lessons learned on effective CD in Central Australia with Government and non-government agencies to promote support for CD approaches.

## Strategies

1. Disseminate monitoring and evaluation reports to relevant Commonwealth and Northern Territory ministers and departments, as well as Aboriginal and other non-government organisations doing development work across Australia.
2. Present on CD program outcomes at relevant development conferences and forums.
3. With input from the CLC CD Reference group prepare and publish papers on lessons learned on the CD Program.
4. Continue to liaise and share information on CD methodologies with other agencies working in the region.
5. Participate in the Australian Council for International Development's (ACFID) Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Program's Community of Practice.





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"I really enjoyed this journey to success...  
Knowing what we've achieved, we can do other projects."  
(Aboriginal community member, 2015)



For more information contact the CLC on (08) 8951 6367 or go to [www.clc.org.au](http://www.clc.org.au).