



2022 Indigenous Governance Awards



Finalists site visit locations

CATEGORY 1

South Australian West Coast ACCHO Network, SAWCAN

Whyalla, SA
Port Lincoln, SA
Ceduna, SA
Yalata, SA
Oak Valley, SA

CATEGORY 1

Strengthening of the Koling Wada-ngal Committee to Support Community in the West

Wyndham, VIC

CATEGORY 1

AH&MRC Human Research Ethics Committee

Little Bay Sydney, NSW

CATEGORY 2

Brewarrina Local Aboriginal Land Council

Brewarrina, NSW

CATEGORY 2

Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation

Esperance, WA

CATEGORY 2

Naru Goori Groms

Coffs Harbour, NSW

CATEGORY 3

Robe River Kuruma Aboriginal Corporation

Karratha, WA

CATEGORY 3

Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists Aboriginal Corporation

The Kimberley, Arnhem Land, the Tiwi Islands and Darwin/Katherine

CATEGORY 3

Wungening Aboriginal Corporation

East Perth, WA

About the Indigenous Governance Awards

The Indigenous Governance Awards share and promote success from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations around Australia.

There are three categories of Award for outstanding examples of governance in Indigenous-led organisations:

Category One:

Outstanding examples of governance in Indigenous-led non-incorporated initiatives or projects

Category Two:

Outstanding examples of governance in Indigenous-led small to medium incorporated organisations (under \$1 million annual revenue)

Category Three:

Outstanding examples of governance in Indigenous-led large, incorporated organisations (\$1 million and over annual revenue)

Reconciliation Australia and the BHP Foundation have proudly partnered to deliver the Indigenous Governance Awards since their inception in 2005.

In 2018 we welcomed the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) as co-host and we continue to work together around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance and success.

Message from Reconciliation Australia

Since 2005, the Indigenous Governance Awards have showcased some of the best and brightest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led innovation, ingenuity, skill and excellence.

I have been lucky to have been involved in and observe six of these Awards, and every time I am blown away by the incredible work First Nations' peoples are doing across the country.

Over the years, the Awards have highlighted many different organisations from diverse Nations, industries and services. However, what has remained consistent is the ability of Indigenous Governance Awards finalists to lead with culture, community and self-determination at their core – and to succeed while doing it.

This being said, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the 2022 Indigenous Governance Awards as unlike any other that has come before it – and not just because this was the first year recognising small to medium incorporated organisations.

Originally planned for 2020, these Awards were beset by two years of postponements, false starts and last-minute pivots. Just when it looked like it was safe to proceed with one plan, changes in COVID-19 lockdowns and state border restrictions would necessitate the formulation of a new one.

Reconciliation Australia's Indigenous Governance Program, along with our partners the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, the BHP Foundation, and of course the judging panel, were forced to reassess and revise the delivery of the Awards an unthinkable number of times.

Mirroring this process were the finalists themselves: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations who were likewise adapting to, and in many cases pre-empting, the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis.

Like many other First Nations organisations across the country, they employed strong, embedded cultural values of community, compassion and reciprocity to proactively respond to the crisis, protecting the people they serve, as well as safeguarding the longevity of their operations.

The finalists of the 2022 Indigenous Governance Awards remind us of what can be achieved when decision-making and leadership is centred in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They show us, and wider Australia, what can be learnt and gained from First Nations ways of doing, knowing and being.

I am immensely proud of the resilience, flexibility and creativity of everyone involved in the 2022 Indigenous Governance Awards and look forward to continuing to celebrate stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success and excellence.

Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer, Reconciliation Australia



CEO of Reconciliation Australia, Karen Mundine.
Photo: Joseph Mayers

Message from the BHP Foundation



Chair of BHP Foundation, Chip Goodyear.
Photo supplied

At the BHP Foundation it is our purpose to make a positive difference today and to future generations by delivering scalable solutions to some of the world's most critical sustainable development challenges.

In our pathway to this ambition, it is our enormous privilege to partner with many First Nations organisations and communities across our portfolio, both in Australia and in countries across North and South America.

In Australia, we support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations in their drive towards self-determination. We believe the only long-term sustainable solution to addressing issues of inequality is supporting Indigenous peoples to self-determine through having voice and choice: a voice in decisions affecting them and making their own choices related to their futures.

Australia is at a pivotal moment in time for Indigenous self-determination. Initiatives like Reconciliation Australia's Indigenous Governance Awards, a program we have been honoured to partner with for many years, recognise and celebrate excellence in Indigenous organisations who are self-determining, driving positive change in their communities and bringing their experiences to the forefront of the national conversation.

To this year's finalists we offer our congratulations - you join a long line of successful and inspirational Indigenous individuals and organisations demonstrating strong leadership and governance that results in positive outcomes for the communities you serve. We celebrate your strength and resilience and look towards a future where the power of Indigenous innovation, effectiveness and cultural leadership is seen and valued across the country, every day.

Chip Goodyear
Chair, BHP Foundation

'An outstanding group of finalists providing leadership and inspiration in how Indigenous organisations can navigate complex problems with culturally-appropriate solutions.'

Message from the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute

The Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) is a national not-for-profit organisation celebrating 10 years in 2022. We envisage a future Australia where Indigenous peoples, communities and nations can exercise their right to self-determination and economic development through strong self-governance.

We are proud to partner with Reconciliation Australia and the BHP Foundation on the Indigenous Governance Awards program. The Awards highlight the very best of what is happening in Indigenous governance around the nation, and 2022 is no exception.

As Indigenous peoples we have always had the strength and vision to lead our communities. The contemporary challenge is in two-way governance - holding true to the culture, laws, and forms of accountability of the communities we serve while responding effectively to the wider governance environment. At AIGI we have been thoroughly impressed by the calibre of this year's finalists and moved by the impact they have created in their communities. They demonstrate that real change happens when practical, effective, and culturally legitimate governance is in place.

This year's finalists operate across vastly different sectors - from surfing to housing to the arts and they are all generating results through governance that meets their people's priorities and ways of working. AIGI is proud to work with the finalists to support their ongoing success and to share their strategies as inspiration for other Indigenous organisations in the forthcoming 2022 Stories of Success publication.

Jessica Bulger
CEO, Australian Indigenous Governance Institute

'We have been thoroughly impressed by the calibre of this year's finalists and moved by the impact they have created in their communities.'



CEO of Australian Indigenous Governance Institute,
Jessica Bulger. Photo supplied

Message from the Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel Co-Chairs

The Indigenous Governance Awards acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of First Nations organisations from throughout Australia.

The awards recognise the incredible people and communities who are the lifeblood of these organisations.

We're inspired by their enduring commitment to providing culturally informed ways of working, which drive positive, long-lasting change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The quality of finalists this year is impressive. After the unavoidable pandemic disruptions and postponements through 2020 and 2021, it's our honour and privilege to showcase their stories of uncompromising strength and resilience.

The finalists' abilities and successes challenge negative stereotypes and perceptions.

These awards promote how effective Indigenous governance can successfully combine traditional practices based in culture and kinship, with working within the requirements of mainstream systems.

This year's finalists are not only exceptional examples of First Nations leadership. They also share an ability to adapt and change in sometimes uncertain, and ever-changing environments.

'These awards are an affirmation of unwavering leadership, tenacity and cultural pride.'

Each finalist in the three categories has found a distinct and culturally-safe way to work for and with their community, giving a voice and vehicle for self-determination and independence.

In the projects and non-incorporated initiatives category, the AH&MRC Ethics Committee's self-determination and innovation ensures health research with and about Aboriginal people is conducted ethically and safely.

The South Australian West Coast ACCHO Network (SAWCAN) combines the strength of five community-controlled organisations working together to overcome the challenges and issues in providing quality primary health care to their communities.

And the commitment and resolve shown by the Kolling wada-ngal committee members has resulted in the Aboriginal community of Wyndham Victoria having a safe place to nurture and pass on culture for generations to come.

In the small to medium incorporated organisations category, the Brewarrina Local Aboriginal Land Council working towards the right to a distinct status and culture, the right to self-determination, and the right to land.

The Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation in Esperance is involving its whole community in cultural and environmental education and preservation, creating beautiful spaces for people to come together.

And community organisation Naru Goori Grooms has helped over 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people make healthy choices through their culturally safe and fun surf program on Gumbaynggirr Country in NSW.

In the large incorporated organisations category, Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists (ANKA) have shown how to use influence and networks to bolster governance, helping to keep Aboriginal art and copyright under community control.

Wungening in Perth is a progressive and culturally safe space providing holistic support for community and families in housing, health, and justice.

And native title body Robe River Kuruma Aboriginal Corporation (RRKAC) is part of an intricate governance structure engaging Robe River Kuruma people in environment management services to keep culture strong and in the hands of the community.

The positive impact all the finalists have on the health and wellbeing of people in their communities cannot be underestimated. There's no doubt that the restoration and preservation of culture and traditional knowledge – through Indigenous governance practices – is crucial to the healing process.

We can say unequivocally that – as a judging panel – our eyes have been opened to potential and possibility through this process.

For these awards, we welcomed seven new judges to the panel of eight, all experts in their respective fields. Their expertise and perspectives drawn from health, justice, academia, economic development, business, and governance, bring invaluable lens to the awards' decisions.

It has been an honour for all of us on the judging panel to read about and talk to the leaders and innovators at the forefront of Indigenous governance.

In the judging of previous Indigenous Governance Awards, the judging panel would assess written applications and then visit each site to see the finalists' governance practice in action. This year however, due to the pandemic and associated restrictions, all judging took place virtually, via online video platforms.

Despite this lack of face-to-face engagement, the judges were able to connect with each finalist on their governance style, achievements and challenges.

We thank the finalists for sharing their stories and our fellow judges for being flexible and dedicated to the success of the judging process.

It is clear that each finalist is justifiably proud of their achievements.

Through challenging times and with restricted funding, these organisations have created innovative programs and initiatives that will continue to benefit their communities far into the future, creating a legacy for generations to come.

On behalf of all the judges, we congratulate all the 2022 Indigenous Governance Awards finalists. We also thank the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute and the BHP Foundation, Reconciliation Australia's partners in these unique awards.

These awards are an affirmation of unwavering leadership, tenacity and cultural pride. The finalists model standards that other organisations can observe and build on, and that will help to advance First Nations peoples in Australia and internationally.

Janine Mohamed and Eddie Cubillo
Co-chairs, Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel.



Uncle Danny Kelly and Auntie Rochelle Patten, Recognised Elders and Committee Members. Photo: Abe Byrne-Jameson

AH&MRC Human Research Ethics Committee

Category 1



Michael Doyle and Dr Summer May Finlay, Co-chairs AH&MRC Ethics Committee. Photo: Abe Byrne-Jameson

Making health and medical research work for community

Since 1996, the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) has been making research safer and better for the community. To guide this work, they've established the AH&MRC Human Research Ethics Committee.

Its 18 members of community representatives and legal and medical professionals are changing the way research is done with First Nations peoples. They make sure research put the community first, is done in a culturally appropriate way, and involves and considers the people that it affects.

'So much research had been done on our people, and they were doing research without our permission... and even going and recovering our ancestral remains and researching them as well ...Now we get to approve their applications...it [the Ethics Committee] has given us a bit of say... it gives us the power of decision-making which comes from community control.'

– Uncle Danny Kelly, Recognised Elder and Committee Member.

First Nations principles in research

The 18 committee members' expertise and experience supports research design that's meaningful, ethical and culturally appropriate. They help minimise harm and risks for Aboriginal communities.

To do this, they've put in place 5 key principles, which a research project must embed to get approval:

1. Net Benefits for Aboriginal people and communities
2. Aboriginal Community Control of Research
3. Cultural Sensitivity
4. Reimbursement of costs
5. Enhancing Aboriginal skills and knowledge

'I think having the committee really helped non-Aboriginal researchers and Aboriginal researchers [be] accountable and made everyone aware that they, [when] putting in an application that they need good Aboriginal governance and that if it is Aboriginal specific research they need Aboriginal people involved in that research.'

– Michael Doyle, Co-chair AH&MRC Ethics Committee

Taking the lead

The Ethics Committee is a driving force in health and medical research, with researchers looking to them for best practice. The committee also now plays an educational role to educate academics and institutions.

'As someone who is sort of new to the academia space, it is good to see that Elders like yourself saw this a long time ago to put pressure on, and make sure there are some real ethics around our people. We still have to educate these young aspiring academics who [claim] to be experts on us. Thank you, what you are saying makes real sense and also gives someone like myself perspective on where we are going.'

– Eddie Cubillo Co-Chair Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel.



Zell Dodd - CEO, Yadu Health Aboriginal Corporation and Cindy Zbierski - CEO, Chief Executive Officer of Nunyara Aboriginal Health Service . Photo: Robert Lang

South Australian West Coast ACCHO Network

Category 1



Samantha Fleming, Registered Nurse at Oak Valley Health Clinic. Photo: Polly Paerata

Stronger together

The South Australian West Coast ACCHO Network (SAWCAN) combines the resources, knowledge and passion of five member ACCHOs. Under the SAWCAN banner, they work together to overcome the common challenges and issues faced in providing quality primary health care to their communities.

'The strength of this network has revitalised my enthusiasm to go to work every day because there is actually someone to share with – there is strength in numbers.'

– Cindy Zbierski, CEO Nunyara Aboriginal Health Service.

Working as one

SAWCAN pools the knowledge and expertise and balances the governance structures of its five members organisations. This has helped them to optimise grant funding, advocacy and service delivery to maximise health outcomes for the community.

'We are all a part of Western Desert language and the family kinship right across from Whyalla, Port Lincoln, right across to Oak Valley, so we all share the same transit family, not just transit – they are family that moves through here, using the same service...it brings it all together. And as far as the cultural aspects the CEOs have the cultural knowledge and also the knowledge of the staff that support all the programs and funding and applications that we are trying to support and do in the region.'

– Uncle Warren Miller, Community Leader/Elder – Ceduna.

Strengthening the patient journey

SAWCAN has strengthened the patient journey through culture and kinship. The five communities living in the Eyre Peninsula and Far West Coast regions now have access to culturally respectful, Indigenous-led health services. Through their collaborative model, and excellence in advocating for their community needs, SAWCAN members are delivering on their vision to develop culturally safe solutions that get results.

'The fact that you have been able to, in such a short amount of time, change the way that governments themselves saw their program objectives and you were able to step into that space and not only speak to it but re-negotiate what that looked like for your mob, I think speaks volumes about the strength of your collaboration and the value that others see in it as well, including government.'

– Romlie Mokak, Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel.



Robert Monohan, Committee Co-chair.
Photo: Abe Byrne-Jameson

Koling Wada-ngal committee

Category 1



Karen Jackson, Committee Co-chair and Deb Evans, Board member. Photo: Abe Byrne-Jameson

From little things.....

Back in 2013, at the Wyndham Aboriginal Forum, a recommendation was made to establish an Aboriginal Community Centre in Wyndham. A committee formed soon after, along with a vision to create a culturally safe place for strengthening community, cultural development and connections.

The next year, in partnership with Wyndham City, a Community Infrastructure Planning grant was awarded to investigate and establish an Aboriginal Community Centre.

'One of the main reasons we got together as a committee was because of small programs that were beginning to bring people together, such as the cultural workshops Deb used to run, but there were other small groups, such as dance groups, homework centres and they kept going. We had grown out of our space...'

– Karen Jackson,
Committee Co-chair.

A vision comes to life

Described as 'a landscape with a building in it', the award winning Wunggurrwil Dhurrung Centre is now home to the Aboriginal Community Centre that was envisioned back in 2013.

'Wunggurrwil Dhurrung means strong heart, and the centre itself, when you walk in there as you would have noticed, it really encapsulates the meaning of a strong heart. It's a community centre, built by mob, for mob, and that's something you don't see a lot...there are no closed walls...it's a moving body.'

– Stephanie Skinner,
Traditional Owner.

Committed leaders

The commitment and resolve shown by the committee members to follow through with their vision has resulted in the Aboriginal community of Wyndham having this beautiful space. Their determination shows pride in culture and the centre will be a safe place to nurture and pass on culture for generations to come.

'This journey has been a fantastic experience, and to learn about the development of the centre and see it there, I appreciate the thought, love, and passion which has gone into the design of that beautiful space. I think it has come through really strong to me today, and the commitments of you all as leaders in organisations and the community, to realise that dream and bring other stakeholders along and got a real sense of reconciliation and governance.'

– Kenny Bedford, Indigenous
Governance Awards judging panel.





Brewarrina kids playing at weir.
Photo credit: Urain Warraweena

Caption

Brewarrina Local Aboriginal Land Council

Category 2



Brewarrina Grandfather with his kids and grandkids at a Community day. Photo credit: Urain Warraweena

Striving forward

A significant place steeped in history, Brewarrina in northwest NSW has much to celebrate and protect. It's the site of the oldest known human structure in the world – the Brewarrina Fish Traps – and is one of the great inter-tribal meeting places of eastern Australia.

It's also a community that's experienced deep trauma. The first Aboriginal mission in Australia was built there. It's been the subject of two Royal Commission inquiries and was twice named one of the most disadvantaged communities in the nation.

This combination makes Brewarrina's needs complex and challenging, and the Brewarrina Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) has stepped up with community-led solutions.

'This board and CEO have just moved on from the negativity which is present in a lot of communities. They're showing that change from negativity can be done. They've pushed on from the past, which I wish could happen in all communities.'
– Craig Brit, Brewarrina LALC staff member.

Local solutions for local needs

The Brewarrina LALC Board re-established in 2016, coming out of administration as a one-person organisation with a goal of:

- promoting community-building activities
- working with key stakeholders who have a mission to support the local community.

It continues services and community projects like maintaining the Fish Traps, hosting consultation between different communities who gather there, and pursuing social justice. It's also just bought a main-street office – strong foundations to support a growing team. Mentoring to encourage leadership in future generations is the main goal.

'It's something to be proud of as an Elder of the community, to see finally we have an organisation that can support the community and does a lot of good...I'm proud of the brothers and sisters.'
– Uncle Isaac Gordon, Brewarrina Elder.

Leading into the future

The council works tirelessly to represent Brewarrina's complex affairs and interests to the state government, and further its aspirations. This voice is getting louder and stronger, showing how community-based governance leads to Indigenous-led excellence.

'Brewarrina community shows how important one organisation is to their community, through their amazing leadership...it has blown me away.'
– Donna Murray, Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel.





Robert Woods, MAC, Project/Ground staff. Photo: Salty Davenport

Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation

Category 2



Aunty Lurlene Graham, MAC, Director & Aunty Annie Dabb, Recognised Elder Photo: Salty Davenport

Cultural preservation and education

At the heart of the Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) is a clear focus on cultural education and preservation. Their programs involve the whole community, connecting people, ideas and resources in the spirit of reconciliation.

The two main programs through Mudjar are the Nyungar Kadij (Understanding Nyungar) Program and the Ngualla Mia (Our Place) Project. Both were developed in response to the need for improved engagement and cultural understanding within the wider community.

'One of the biggest things I find with the group that they (Mudjar) have got here is that the culture is still intact, and the respect for the community.'
– Richard Bourne, Community Member.

Innovation and resilience

Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation started life as the Esperance Nyungar Aboriginal Corporation in 2002. From humble beginnings in a one room office, it has evolved to include the Mudjar Aboriginal Gallery, the MAC shed and workshop and rooms for event and meeting hire.

MAC also run workshops throughout the community, in schools, workplaces and businesses.

'What we had was a little one-room office, then it went another say two-room office, and we worked and worked and did what we had to do, and we supported the corporation from the beginning to where it is today, and now we own our own building. We have come a long way.'
– Lurlene Graham, MAC Board.

A sustainable future

Planned for completion in late 2022, Mudjar Cultural Gardens and Bush Tucker Plant Nursery will allow tourists and the community to learn about Nyungar living culture.

There's no doubt that the Mudjar Aboriginal Corporation has enriched the lives of those who live in or visit the region, and its strong, Indigenous-led governance has allowed it to do so.

'Having grown up in WA and being [from] Kalgoorlie I know that Esperance is a real melting pot for the Ngadju, Esperance and Wongi people. It is interesting how you have continued to update your business and governance structures to reflect what mob on Country actually want.'
– Nadine Highfield, Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel.





James Mercy and Amber Hamer, Co-Founders, Naru Goori Groms. Photo: Archie Mercy

Naru Goori Groms

Category 2



Groms in action! Photo: Brad Rathbone

Celebrating saltwater culture

For the Gumbaynggir people of the Coffs Harbour region in NSW, the ocean is a source of strength, joy and healing. It's significant for culture and lifestyle.

Naru Indigenous Corporation launched Goori Groms back in 2020 to celebrate saltwater and connect the community through the sport of surfing.

'We wanted to bring the community back together around the ocean – because the community here in Gumbaynggir country was very strong in their surfing.'
– Amber Hamer, Naru Goori Groms.

More than a Learn to Surf program

Naru Goori Groms was inspired by the life of Eric Mercy, a local man who represented surfing at the international level and dedicated many years to enhancing the lives of First Nations youth on the mid-north coast of NSW.

What began as a way to mark 20 years since Eric's passing has evolved a significant program teaching young mob how to surf and promoting healthy lifestyles in a culturally safe space. Participants also learn First Aid and lifesaving skills while family and community gather together in the sunshine and the ocean.

'What struck me is that unfortunately for a lot of mob surfing and getting down to the water and getting swim lessons in, to gain that confidence, is expensive and time-consuming so Naru was developed in response to that.'
– Noah Bedford, Naru Goori Groms Staff.

Giving back to community

Every year, during NAIDOC week, the Naru Surf Gathering sees First Nations surfers and their families coming together in Coffs Harbour to compete. All proceeds from the event are donated to mental health and suicide awareness charities to provide crucial support to First Nations peoples suffering grief, loss and trauma.

'Amber, the board and you should be very proud of what you have achieved. I have heard about you, coming out of the Liverpool plains way, and I have seen a small snippet on television one day. But that doesn't convey, what you have managed to achieve and what you are doing for the community, and especially the youth of the community.'
– Val Price-Bek, Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel.





Michelle Woody Minnapinni (ANKA board member and director at Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association) with 'Ngiya Murrakupuni (My Country)'. She is also holding a 'Marriwiji', (pandanus skirt). Photo © the artist and Jilamara Arts and crafts association.

Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists Aboriginal Corporation

Category 3



Mr. Ngaralja Tommy May (Special Adviser to ANKA) and Mr. Djambawa Marawili AM (ANKA Chairman) standing in front of Mr. May's artwork, Headdress for the Kural Ceremony at the ANKA Office on Larrakia Country, Darwin.

Walking together

Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists Aboriginal Corporation (ANKA) represents and advocates for over 5,000 artists across four regions – Arnhem Land, the Kimberley, Darwin/Katherine, and the Tiwi Islands – an area spanning over 1 million km².

The corporation is nationally and internationally recognised as the face and voice of Aboriginal art in northern Australia. In over 30 years of safeguarding 'Aboriginal control over Aboriginal art', they are a unifying force for Aboriginal people across these regions.

'We all walking together. No one on the back, no one on the front. Making a clear pathway for the next generation to come.'

– Djambawa Marawili, ANKA Chairperson & Board Director, Arnhem Land.

Strength from connections

The strong networks and connections that ANKA has nurtured for over 30 years have allowed their programs to expand and evolve.

Through advocacy, marketing, promotion and training, they work with members, governing boards and staff to advance and protect the interests of Aboriginal artists, arts workers, and Art Centres.

ANKA continues to use its reach and influence to combat the challenges presented by fake art and copyright infringement, and those felt through the COVID-19 pandemic.

'Over the years being involved in ANKA I have never seen ANKA as an organisation it was more of a family, and once you meet up with everybody, they are your lifelong friend, and you have that connection'

– Lynley Nargoodah, Vice-Chair of Mangkaja Arts.

Keeping art, Country, and culture strong

Governed by a strong, all-Indigenous Board, ANKA is justifiably proud of its vision to bring Aboriginal art and culture to an international audience by showcasing the talent of Aboriginal artists based in both remote and urban communities.

ANKA keeps Aboriginal art strong, advocating for the recognition and celebration of traditional knowledge, country and culture. In turn, they are protecting peoples' creative rights, economic freedom, and the wellbeing that comes with it.

'We have certainly heard about how ANKA really does support the cultural determinants of health, particularly by way of mental health and wellbeing and connectedness, particularly the relationships people hold, not just individually to each other, but to the organisation.'

– Janine Mohammed, Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel Co-Chair.

Robe River Kuruma Aboriginal Corporation

Category 3

After the loss of two much-loved and respected Elders, Robe River Kuruma Aboriginal Corporation (RRKAC) made the difficult decision to withdraw from the 2022 Indigenous Governance Awards.

However, the judging panel would like to acknowledge RRKAC's excellence and success in Indigenous governance.

Working for Native Title

Robe River Kuruma people have native title rights covering nearly 16,000 km² of the Pilbara region in WA, including the complete Robe River system.

Based in Karratha, RRKAC plays an important role in advocating and progressing the interests of the Robe River Kuruma people they represent. As their registered native title body, RRKAC helps to protect and preserve cultural heritage while monitoring and implementing various participation agreements.

They also provide community projects, programs and services for Robe River Kuruma people.

'RRKAC's vision has the following aspiration: 'Working together as a community to establish a solid foundation towards independence, community wellbeing and cultural identity now and for future generations.'
– RRKAC Application

Customised governance

RRKAC is one of a broad structure of entities known as the RRK Group. They play an important part in the wellbeing of Robe River Kuruma community and Country.

The group maximises benefits to the community through a cross-governance system of Boards and committees – a unique structure driven by traditional processes.

'The RRKAC governance structure is customised, practical and culturally legitimate.'
– Application review, Australian Indigenous Governance Institute.

Keeping community empowered

Using traditional knowledge to care for Robe River Kuruma Country and engaging Robe River Kuruma people in environment management services keeps culture strong and in the hands of the community.

Culture clearly plays an important role in how the organisation functions and is the underlying purpose for their drive to establish and maintain best practice governance, as evidenced in their organisational objectives.

'They describe social legitimacy from the perspectives of the members as critical to the organisation's success and explain that it is their community-compatible governance structures and processes that ensure the organisation is 'community led, controlled and championed'
– Application Review, Australian Indigenous Governance Institute.



Daniel Morrison, CEO Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. Photo: Salty Davenport

Wungening Aboriginal Corporation

Category 3



Doreen Nelson, Community Elder (Life Member). Photo: Salty Davenport

Self-determined success

A passionate group of Aboriginal people in Perth got together 34 years ago, concerned that mob, severely impacted by alcohol and other drugs, needed more than the mainstream services on offer. They came up with a plan: to provide a centre for support services, tailored for Aboriginal people.

They set up Wungening Aboriginal Corporation which today helps Aboriginal families to stay together and connected to each other and to culture. They support people with housing and homelessness, alcohol and drug dependence, justice and family violence.

'It's culturally focused and the ways of working are supporting the cultural needs of our clients, not just their clinical needs. So, connecting to the Country, hearing stories, and looking at what is happening in their lives and their lived experiences is important. Wungening is focused on healing, as that's what it means in Noongar – healing around culture and their needs.'

– Glenda Kickett, Wungening Board Member and Vice Chairperson.

Strength in partnerships

As the largest Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) in Perth, Wungening is sharing its governance knowledge to strengthen and empower other Aboriginal organisations, helping to build capacity to support a healthy, safe and strong community.

'Over the years we have been relying heavily on mainstream organisations to service and support our community, which isn't great, because we know what works best for our community, and we engage most with our community, so it makes sense we are the ones supporting our community.'

– Daniel Morrison, Wungening CEO.

Culture at the front

In 2021, Wungening provided services to 94,261 people in 13 community locations. They now employ 200+ people full-time, across 13 sites.

By understanding historical factors that impact Aboriginal health and wellbeing, culturally secure programs are delivered by professional and qualified staff. Connection to culture and community are at the heart of what they do.

'I think today, all the stories are exactly what the Indigenous Governance Awards are about. Growing up young leaders, respecting Elders, and being creative, sustainable.'

– Sarah Brown, Indigenous Governance Awards judging panel.



Judges biographies



Janine Mohamed

Janine has worked in nursing, management, project management, and workforce and health policy in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. Many of these years have been spent in the Aboriginal Changes to Household Contacts- Students Community Controlled Health sector at state, national and international levels, and most recently as the previous CEO at the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM). Janine is now based in Melbourne as the CEO of the Lowitja Institute. She was awarded an Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity Fellowship in 2019, and, in January 2020, was awarded a *Doctorate of Nursing honoris causa* by Edith Cowan University.



Romlie Mokak

Romlie Mokak is a Djugun man and a member of the Yawuru people. Rom has been a Commissioner with the Productivity Commission since 2019. Previously he has been the Chief Executive Officer of the Lowitja Institute and the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, the latter of which he was CEO for almost a decade. Prior to these roles, Rom held policy and program management roles in the Australian and New South Wales governments. Responsibilities spanning a range of areas including substance use, eye health, ageing and disability. Additionally, Rom has been the chair or member of a variety of policy, research and evaluation bodies, notably past chair of the National Health Leadership Forum, a forum that brings together national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing organisations. Rom is a patron of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services and a member of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Board.



Eddie Cubillo

Mr Eddie Cubillo is an Aboriginal man with strong family links in both the urban and rural areas throughout the Northern Territory. He is of Larrakia/Wadjigan and Central Arrente descent. He obtained a Bachelor of Laws Degree and in was admitted to the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. In 2002 he was elected to the ATSIC Yilli Rreung Regional Council, and subsequently became the Chair. Mr Cubillo has also been a former Chair of both the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee. In 2010 Mr Cubillo was appointed the Anti - Discrimination Commissioner of the Northern Territory and following his term, Mr Cubillo took on the role of Executive Officer with National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NATSILS). As the Executive Officer he championed the rights of Indigenous Australians in a legal context. In 2015 Eddie was named the National Indigenous Legal Professional of the year and in 2016 attended Geneva on a UN Indigenous fellowship. Mr Cubillo worked for Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council till 2017 where he then took up an opportunity to work on the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory as the Director of Community Engagement. He is currently undertaking a PhD with the University of Technology of Sydney and is working at the University of Melbourne's Law School as Associate Dean & Senior Research Fellow (Indigenous Programs).



Kenny Bedford

Kenny Bedford is a Traditional Owner of the Meuram Tribe of Erub (Darnley Island) Torres Strait. Kenny has served his community and region as the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Member for Erub and held the Fisheries Portfolio on the TSRA Executive for almost a decade. Kenny was also a Councillor and Deputy Mayor of the inaugural Torres Strait Island Regional Council. As President of the Erub Fisheries Management Association (EFMA) Kenny followed in his Father's footsteps to re-establish the only community owned and managed commercial fishing operation in the Torres Strait. Kenny Bedford is an Owner Director of his own business as well as a Director of the My Pathway Group, a Board Member of Reconciliation Australia and is a Member of the National NAIDOC Committee.



Nadine Highfield

Ms Nadine Highfield is a proud Wangkatha woman from the Eastern-Goldfield's region of Western Australia. She descends from the Waljen clan with strong cultural ties to Kalgoorlie, Leonora and Laverton. Ms Highfield is a qualified lawyer and is admitted to both the High Court of Australia and the ACT Supreme Court. In 2013, Nadine graduated from the Australian National University with a Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice and the University of Western Australia with a Bachelor of Laws. Ms Highfield worked for the Commonwealth Government at the Commonwealth Department of Treasury as a financial analyst and the Australian Government Solicitor as a commercial solicitor. She has also worked at Edith Cowan University as a policy analyst. Ms Highfield is currently Compliance Counsel and an Investigator in BHP's Ethics and Compliance unit.



Donna Murray

Ms Donna Murray is a proud descendant of the Wiradjuri and Wonnarua peoples with kinship and family connections around the Murrumbidgee River and the Hunter Valley, NSW respectively. Donna is currently the Chief Executive Officer and Company Secretary of Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health peak organisation. Donna provides strong strategic leadership across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs and the wider health sector. Donna brings over 25 years' experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and governance, Indigenous health, community development and engagement. Donna is also a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Donna is actively involved in the education sector as an Adjunct Senior Lecturer position with the Centre for Rural and Remote Health, James Cook University and an honorary position with the University of Technology Sydney, Faculty of Health. Donna is also actively engaged on several Australian University Advisory and Governance Committees. Donna works closely with key stakeholders and community participating on several national and state allied health and Indigenous health committees focused on workforce development, cultural safety and policy development. She is currently the Chairperson of the National Health Leadership Forum and Co-Chair of the Implementation Plan Advisory Group for the review of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-23. She has a genuine commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through supporting cultural priorities and aspirations for families and communities. Donna is also actively engaged in nation building and strengthening Indigenous governance.



Sarah Brown

Sarah Brown AM is the Chief Executive Officer of Purple House and has been helping the Indigenous Directors to run the organisation since its inception more than eighteen years ago. As well as being a judge this year Sarah and Purple House were the winner of the Indigenous Governance Award Category A (incorporated organisations) in 2016, helping to provide her a unique perspective to this year's judging panel. Sarah holds a Master of Nursing, a Graduate Diploma in Aboriginal Education, and a Graduate Diploma in Health Service Management. Prior to joining Purple House, she was as a remote area nurse and university lecturer. Sarah has been recognised in many ways for the work she does, being named Hesta's Australia's Nurse of the Year in 2017, being listed as one of BOSS magazine's 'True Leaders' in 2018, and in 2020 Sarah received an Order of Australia Medal for "her significant service to community health, remote nursing and Indigenous communities".



Val Price-Beck

Val Price-Beck is a Kamilaroi woman from the Liverpool Plains of New South Wales with over 20 years experience in Indigenous economic development. Val also has extensive experience in both corporate services and corporate governance having worked in both the private and public sector. This has included being the Chief Executive Officer of the Indigenous Business Council of Australia and a members of Indigenous Business Australia's executive management team. Currently Val is a Director on the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute where she holds the position of Duty Chair in an Executive role, as well as a Director at the National Health Funding Body, a body that supports the obligations and responsibilities of the Administrator through best practice administration of public hospital funding.

About: Shining a Light

The 2022 Indigenous Governance Awards graphics are drawn from the artwork Shining a Light by Kristie Peters. The artwork expresses the courage, inspiration and culture at the heart of Indigenous Governance, and organisations creating long-lasting change. The U shapes around the large central meeting place at the heart of the artwork represent the pathways, energy and exceptional people working for a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Handprints show ancestral spiritual ties, honour our Elders, and acknowledge future leaders as they carry forward memories, traditions and hopes. Smaller meeting places, song lines, and travelling lines all combine to show the strength of connections and collaboration to find solutions and pathways forward. We pay our deepest respects to those who have come before us, sharing important cultural knowledge, wisdom and strength.



About the artist

Kristie Peters is a proud Wiradjuri woman and the founder and CEO of Yarrudhamarra Creations, an Aboriginal-owned and family operated business. Yarrudhamarra means dream and reflects Kristie's mission of making dreams into reality by connecting people through Aboriginal art and culture; her key message being, we are all together as one. Her art endeavours to shine a light for reconciliation for the past present and future, enabling people to gain a deeper appreciation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural practices. Kristie is from Wiradjuri Country; Dubbo NSW and currently lives on Ngunnawal Country, Canberra with her eight beautiful boys.

Indigenous Governance Awards 2022

Acknowledgments

Reconciliation Australia, the BHP Foundation and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute would like to acknowledge all the applicants in the 2022 Indigenous Governance Awards. We thank the applicants for the time and effort they invested in the application process. The strength and quality of applications is testament to the outstanding work undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and initiatives every day.

We'd particularly like to thank the finalists in this year's Awards. Every finalist went to extraordinary efforts - throughout the online judging process - to present their organisations to the judging panel and broader Indigenous Governance team.

This publication, and the Awards more broadly, provide opportunities to showcase the finalists' governance practices, share their stories of success and assist them to achieve the recognition they deserve.

The dedication of the judging panel members has been essential to the success of the Awards. The panel is made up of a diverse group of individuals from various sectors, bringing with them extensive experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. Every judge contributed significant time in their busy schedule to the rigorous judging process.

Thank you also to the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute and the BHP Foundation for their ongoing support.

Finally, a special thank you goes to Wiradjuri artist, Kristie Peters, for allowing us to use her beautiful artwork throughout the Awards.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and particularly thank all those on whose land we have travelled over the past 12 months.

