



AIGI

## SPEAKER SERIES

WEBINAR: GOVERNING THROUGH CRISIS

13 MAY 2020



*“Self-determination for our people is key here, and Governments do not stop us from practising that, as we have demonstrated this from the Pandemic...”*

**(Aunty Pat Turner, AM)**



# GOVERNING THROUGH CRISIS

## SUMMARY

**Date:** Wednesday, 13 May 2020  
**Time:** 11:00 am to 12:00 noon  
**Facilitator:** Michelle Deshong, CEO, Australian Indigenous Governance Institute  
**Panellists:** Sarah Brown, CEO, Purple House  
Peter Murray, CEO, Yanunijarra Aboriginal Corporation  
Aunty Pat Turner, CEO, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

## Our Speakers



### **Sarah Brown, CEO, Purple House**

Sarah has built relationships with key corporate organisations and supporters to ensure the success of the Purple House mission - to improve the lives of people with renal failure, reunite families and reduce the impact of kidney disease in our communities.

Sarah is a member of Central Australian Health Committee, Northern Territory Government consumer group to advise health services in central Australia. Sarah is also one of two NT representatives on the Friends of the National Rural Health Alliance Committee. She is regularly invited to provide input into development of Government Policies on remote health. She often speaks at local and Rotary events and will do anything she can to promote the amazing work of Purple House across Northern Territory, Western Australia, and South Australia. Sarah's passion for nursing and remote health services has resulted in her holding a master's in nursing, a Graduate Diploma in Aboriginal Education and Graduate Diploma in Health Care Management.

Prior to joining Purple House, Sarah was a remote nurse and University Lecturer. In the very small amount of time that Sarah has she paints and has held art exhibitions in Australia and overseas. Sarah has been making John Adams' life a misery for the past 25 years and has three grown up children and drives a 1959 Morris Minor.



### **Peter Murray, CEO, Yanunijarra Aboriginal Corporation**

Peter Murray is the CEO of Yanunijarra Aboriginal Corporation that manages the Warlu Jilaja Jumu Indigenous Protect Area and Ngurrara Working on Country Ranger Programs and also the deputy Chairperson of the 10 Desert Project.

A Walmajarri person on Ngurrara part A of the Great Sandy Desert and is assisting communities build capacity to function in a remote and isolated area.

Mr Murray assist rangers in their mission to look after country and his group currently working on monitoring climate change and formulating adaptation strategies to reduce negative impacts on his country and people when making decision on land issues through cultural and mainstream governance.

He works closely with the senior elders of his tribe to pass on knowledge from elders to youth while inspiring others to become leader and role models within his community.



**Aunty Pat Turner AM, CEO, AM, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)**

The daughter of an Arrernte man and a Gurdanji woman, Pat was raised in Alice Springs. As CEO of NACCHO, she is at the forefront of community efforts to Close the Gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Pat has over 40 years' experience in senior leadership positions in government, business and academia including being the only Aboriginal person, only woman and longest serving CEO of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC). Amongst her many appointments, she also spent 18 months as Monash Chair of Australian Studies, Georgetown University, Washington DC, and was inaugural CEO of NITV.

Pat is the Coalition of Peaks Convenor and Co-Chair of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap. Pat holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Canberra where she was awarded the University prize for Development Studies.

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## Key Themes

- Indigenous communities reacted fast and quickly in response to the COVID19 pandemic and implemented measures early on to protect and keep safe Indigenous communities.
- This situation has fostered improved communication from community, local, regional, State, and national networks, through the adoption of various mediums of communication – telephone, video, electronic, social media, and print.
- Technology has been a major factor in the effectiveness in responding to the COVID19 challenges, such as broadening the access to health services through telehealth and the increase reach through language apps and translations of information into Indigenous language.
- For those who have isolated on community, this period has seen a return to country and cultural practices, such as hunting, gathering, knowledge sharing, engagement between generations and cultural transmission – seeing returning to the “family”.

## Summary of Discussion

### **What did the early days look like in the response to COVID-19?**

Indigenous communities responded quickly to get to where they needed prior to measures being put in place restricting movement. Large efforts have been made to disseminate information, and the response was large in scale – national, regional, and local. Involving all levels of government and the key portfolios of each State and Territory. The responsiveness and efforts of Indigenous organisations, services, and communities was to work expeditiously and collaboratively.

### **What kind of cultural practices and elements have been embedded in response measures?**

There has been a strong resurgence of the “family unit” and the reconnection with country. When people have been in lock down in their communities, it has enabled families to come together, to engage in hunting and gathering, walking and talking care of country, visiting sacred sites, and engage in knowledge sharing. Aboriginal people over generations have had to adapt and deal with a variety of issues coming their way,



and have done so with creativity, style and compassion. There is a concern about a possible second wave of COVID19 if we come out of the restrictions too soon. The question then turns to how we continue to make those decision and protect community, as restrictions get lifted.

**What are some of the things we have seen emerge out of regional and urban mobs?**

Urban and metropolitan Indigenous Peoples have been thus far the only Indigenous peoples infected by COVID19, and thankfully all were isolated, treated, and none have passed away. COVID19 has given rise to innovation in health provision with the dissemination of information through large networks, and the implementation of tele-health. This situation has also exposed a number of issues, such as the challenges of overcrowded housing, particular in the remote communities. This has also opened up dialogue direct with the NIAA and Premiers as to what the specific needs are for community – community control is the resounding message.

**What techniques or technology have you used to share information about COVID19 and risk with communities?**

The use of social media (such as Facebook), applications for language and translations, as well as physical media such as distribution of posters and flyers throughout community have been used to share information about COVID19 and the health measures in place. This has helped encourage innovation in what we know and acquire new skills through different mediums. Noting the importance of translations into language so as to be particularised for the community it is being delivered to.

**Prior to any crisis, we think about risk and the appropriate measures – was there anything that your organisations had in place before, and secondly, are there lessons now to help mitigate risk, should we face such crisis again.**

Many measures were developed in response to COVID19, while there are things such as networks, and collaboration between organisations and communities prior to, this has been further developed in the wake of COVID19. Adaptations have been made to service delivery such as the use of tele-health services. Other adaptations have been made and measures put in place so that some activities are able to continue to be done but complying with hygiene and social distancing measures.

**What are some of the real positive governance and business developments arising out of this situation, and will there be a new normal coming out of this experience?**

This period saw a dramatic increase in the way in which organisations and communities engaged with one another, there was a stronger collaborative spirit and genuine cooperation between organisations and communities. This period has fostered a strong uplift in communication, the integration of technologies, and cooperation throughout the health networks that are above and beyond historical dealings. A core strength that has been shown is the level of communication from community all the way through to the highest levels of government.

The pandemic has demonstrated that organisations and governments do have the capacity to act quickly and create change. Calls for change from Indigenous peoples have been ignored for a long time, there is still work to be done and need to harness this momentum post COVID.

There are a lot of good things that have come from this, however, there are also some negatives. We need continue with the good and have serious conversations about how to address and deal with the negative aspects arising from the COVID19 situation.



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