Building excellence in remote Indigenous aged care: Tjilpiku Pampaku Ngura

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This paper charts the development of Nganampa Health Council’s regional aged care residential and respite facility, Tjilpiku Pampaku Ngura, situated in Pukatja community on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the remote north-west of South Australia.

Opened in 2000, Tjilpiku Pampaku Ngura (a home for older men and women) is a 16-bed facility that also provides a base for the delivery of Home and Community Care (HACC) services in Pukatja community.

The facility is managed and governed within the broader organisational structure of Nganampa Health Council, an Aboriginal community-controlled health organisation delivering comprehensive primary health care to its Anangu members (as well as 24-hour emergency clinical care to all residents of the APY Lands).

Formally reviewed in 2008 by external consultants (the Broe/Arch Review) and more recently as part of the national Indigenous Aged Care Quality Framework process, Tjilpiku Pampaku Ngura is regarded as a centre of excellence for the national flexible Indigenous aged care services program.

Following a brief overview of funding, staffing and services, this paper identifies and discusses key elements of service development, strategic management and day-to-day operations that contribute to excellence.

In particular, the paper explores the importance of extensive community consultation in the development of the service, governance arrangements securely grounded in consumer/member participation, and the benefits that accrue from the service being embedded in a wider organisational structure and resource base.

The paper then goes on to identify and briefly discuss learnings from this experience that may apply across the national program.

Finally, the paper raises several key planning and strategic management issues for Tjilpiku Pampaku Ngura, and their implications for the national program. In particular the challenges resulting from unfunded capital maintenance costs, inflexible burgeoning regulation and the absence of an effective services and management support network are explored.