



AURUKUN COMMISSIONERS

THREE COUNCILLORS IN AURUKUN

In 2012 four of the Commission's Local Commissioners in Aurukun made the decision to invest further in their community and stood for the position of councillor on the Aurukun Shire Council. Local Commissioners Ada Woolla, Vera Koomeeta, Edgar Kerindun and Doris Poonkamelya based their decision to run for council on their commitment to the community and their desire to play a more active management role.

It was not an easy decision as this was an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on their perception of the roles played by the Local Commissioners since 2008, specifically as to whether they were regarded as successful and influential members of their community.

Three of the four Local Commissioners were successful in gaining seats on the council with Commissioner Poonkamelya narrowly missing out on obtaining the fourth seat. Their success has been a reflection of the acknowledgement of their roles as Indigenous leaders. Further, their election by the community is a positive indication that Indigenous leadership is an essential component to changing social norms.

The role played by a councillor incorporates reviewing matters before council including local objectives, policies, resource allocation and expenditure, and debating local issues including the efficiency of service delivery. An elected member is required to represent the interests of their community members. This role requires them to provide community leadership and guidance, and to enable transparent communication between the community and the council.

Since being elected to represent their community the Aurukun Commissioners have participated in many facets of decision-making in community including reviewing: potential mining leases; town planning submissions; the building of the Business Hub; resealing of the airport; location of a new cemetery; construction of a boat ramp to enable the barge to dock; the building of a day facility at the Home and Community Care Centre; future plans to extend the current residential area and build more houses to accommodate the community; and increasing community safety by initiating a night patrol.

Councillors Woolla, Koomeeta and Kerindun consider that when the Law and Order By-Laws are gazetted for the Aurukun Shire Council it will enable the Council to better police the community.

The incorporation of advocacy and community development functions into the role of the Local Commissioner has further cemented their participation in increasing Indigenous empowerment. The expansion of their advocacy role enhances their ability to form policy decisions to address the community's needs. When combining their roles as Local Commissioners and Aurukun Shire Councillors they are better able to evaluate the effectiveness of their policy decisions and indeed have become local service providers.

"The knowledge gained from the combined roles of Aurukun Shire Councillor and FRC Commissioner has enabled us to take a seat at the table and make more informed decisions. We have identified many areas of community development which involve both our roles, and the experience gained has been invaluable."



*Back Row: Aurukun Commissioner Edgar Kerindun
Front Row: Aurukun Commissioners Vera Koomeeta and Ada Woolla*