

FREE

LANDRIGHTS NEWS

July 2025 VOLUME 15. NUMBER 2. CENTRAL AUSTRALIA



NEW PROTECTED AREA LAUNCHED P. 4



JUSTICE FOR KUMANJAYI WHITE

P. 2



OUR RANGERS LET FLY

P. 8



NATIVE TITLE MADE EASY

P. 12

Australia's Longest Running Aboriginal Newspaper proudly published by the Central Land Council



EDITORIAL

Land Rights News Central Australia is published by the Central Land Council.

The Central Land Council
27 Stuart Hwy
Alice Springs
NT 0870

tel 89516211
www.clc.org.au
email media@clc.org.au

Contributions are welcome

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Land Rights News Central Australia subscriptions are \$22 per year.

It is distributed free of charge to Aboriginal organisations and communities in Central Australia.

To subscribe email
media@clc.org.au
or call 08 8951 6215

ADVERTISING

Advertise in the only newspaper to reliably reach Aboriginal people in remote Central Australia.

Next publication date:
October 2024

Rates are at www.clc.org.au/land-rights-news OR
email media@clc.org.au
OR call 8951 6211

COVER



School boys watch the men dance at the Central Western Desert IPA declaration. Photo Mike Bowers.

CLC MEETINGS

19 – 21 August

Council Kalkaringi

10 – 11 September

Executive Alice Springs

8 – 9 October

Executive Alice Springs

27 – 29 October

Council Yulara

Stop Territory funding until independent process is in place



The NT's latest death in custody triggered protests around the nation, for example in Melbourne.

FEDERAL government funding for the Northern Territory should be withheld until an independent commission investigates police conduct in Yuendumu's latest death in custody.

The Central Land Council chair, Warren Williams said the NT was the only state or territory that does not have an independent body to investigate police conduct. As a result, the NT has failed to overhaul the culture of its police force.

Mr Williams, who lost two loved ones in one week, called on the Federal government to cease NT funding until it agreed to set up an independent 12-month inquiry, led by the NT Coroner to investigate the death of Kumanjayi White.

He said the investigation must target officers with a history of complaints and racist attitudes.

Mr William's nephew Kumanjayi White died in police custody in Alice Springs during National Reconciliation Week.

Later in the week a respected 68-year-old Wadeye elder, who studied teaching with Mr Williams at the Batchelor Institute, died in hospital following his

arrest at Darwin airport.

Mr Williams said the fact that the NT police have no independent oversight makes the desolation and sorrow gripping his community so much harder to bear.

"The NT government receives a lot of federal funding to address the inequality

"Let me be clear: Only money will force the NT government to act. Our lives are worth less than a chocolate bar to those in power and money is the only language they understand."

our people suffer. That funding must not be used for systems that hurt us."

Letters from around 800 Territorians and calls by community leaders, legal experts and politicians for an

investigations at arms length from the NT police have been dismissed by chief minister Lia Finocchiaro as "uneducated".

Mr Williams thanked Indigenous Australians Minister Malarndirri McCarthy for supporting an independent inquiry despite it being dismissed by the prime minister.

"She understands my community needs confidence in the police, and that trust has been eroded."

He also acknowledged "all the good people who gathered in sorrow and solidarity".

A national wave of grief and outrage started with a vigil and smoking ceremony at the Coles supermarket in Alice Springs, where Kumanjayi took his last breaths in the lolly aisle, reportedly with an off-duty policeman's knee on the back of his neck.

Mr Williams does not believe the protests will change the minds of the NT government.

Continued p.17

Mpwerempwer takes Singleton water fight to High Court

THE NATIVE title holders and other traditional owners threatened by the massive Singleton Station water licence have asked the Central Land Council to take their fight for their water rights to Australia's highest court.

Meeting with the CLC's chief executive Les Turner in Tennant Creek, they said they want to start legal action in the High Court in Canberra as soon as possible.

The CLC agreed to represent the Mpwerempwer Aboriginal Corporation in its case against the 40 gegalitre licence - the largest amount of water the Territory has ever given away free of charge.

The desert region's native plants, animals and sacred water sites depend on this groundwater.

"I am worried about this station," elder Ned Kelly told the meeting. "This Mpwerempwer is a powerful place. It covers all this area. It is a powerful story there."

He is counting on the CLC to help the native title holding body for the station, to continue its long fight against the licence.

"CLC that's the only way we can get it, they are fighting for us. We have to keep on fighting."

"They have said many times that they will never stop fighting against the licence that threatens their sacred sites and their

communities' water security," CLC chief executive Les Turner said.

"So we'll consider all avenues open to them now."

The native title holders also decided to take part in an assessment of the



"We have to keep on fighting." Native title holders Annie Morrison, Ned Kelly, Michael Jones, Peter Corbett, Brian Kelly and Jorna Murphy told CLC chief executive Les Turner (second from right) to take their fight against the Singleton water licence to the High Court.



CLP government breaks promises about sacred sites law



Minister Burgoyne has broken his promise to the CLC delegates to “keep talking” about the sacred sites law changes.

THE COUNTRY Liberal Party government has weakened sacred sites protections, breaking promises to the members of the Central Land Council.

The government rushed changes to the Territory’s sacred sites law through the parliament on 16 May, despite NT environment minister Josh Burgoyne’s promises to the council only weeks earlier.

The cattle and mining industries welcomed the changes, which mean that the certificates that set out the conditions for works carried out near the sites can now be transferred or have additional parties added - all without asking the sites’ traditional owners.

CLC chair Warren Williams wrote to the minister before the changes passed, reminding him that he told the CLC’s April meeting at Yulara that “you would keep talking with us”.

At the meeting, members disagreed with the minister’s claim that the proposed changes would “strengthen” the protection of sacred sites.

They demanded he properly consult traditional owners about the changes before passing them.

Mr Burgoyne told them he would do so and that the certificates would

only be transferred for “the exact same work” as that covered by the previous certificate.

He said that traditional owners would be the ones who decide about ‘enforceable undertakings’ – where sacred site damage results in fines or remediation work rather than ending up in court.

They include deliberately unclear wording.

For example, they say certificates can be transferred and include additional parties as long as the proposed work and use of the land are the same.

“‘Use of land’ is very vague,” Mr Williams wrote in the letter.

“Mining is a ‘use of land’, but a mine

“The Sacred Sites Act is meant to protect Aboriginal sacred sites, but Aboriginal people and their representative organisations have not been consulted on these changes.”

He also said he would look into how traditional owners would be compensated if a site is damaged instead of the fine going to the government.

After the meeting Mr Williams wrote to the minister twice, seeking to hold him to these promises.

“I hope that you will be a man of your word,” he wrote.

Yet the changes the government rushed through parliament did none of this.

can be big or small and the conditions needed to protect sacred sites could be very different.”

His letter included a list of suggested improvements to the sacred sites law, all of which the government ignored.

His most important request was to not amend the law without the prior informed consent of the four Territory land councils and the board of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

AAPA, the body overseeing the

protection of sacred sites, also complained about the government’s lack of consultation.

“The Sacred Sites Act is meant to protect Aboriginal sacred sites, but Aboriginal people and their representative organisations have not been consulted on these changes,” AAPA chair Bobby Nunggumajbarr said.

AAPA said the Territory government had missed a crucial opportunity to modernise and strengthen the law and that the changes raised “many questions” about the government’s motivation as it “rush[es] through” amendments with just one week’s notice.

AAPA is worried about transfers of its certificates between proponents, and adding third parties without consultation with the traditional owners, particularly in relation to a proposed hotel development at the Darwin waterfront.

NT Labor accused the government of changing the sacred sites laws to help the hotel development go ahead.

Labor’s Chansey Paech said the bill “exists solely to clear the pathway” for the hotel.

“Nothing more, nothing less,” he said.



CLC and AAPA member Valerie Martin asked the minister to consult properly with traditional owners before changing the sacred sites law.

environmental impact of the company Fortune Agribusiness’ plans to grow fruit and vegetables for overseas markets.

The NT Environmental Protection Agency will check whether the company’s plans to protect dozens of sacred sites, hunting and gathering grounds and other important stories and places on Singleton are good enough.

Before that assessment is finished, the company is not allowed to use the licence to extract groundwater.

The native title holders hope that, if the agency investigates properly, it will see that the damage from the licence will be too big and the NT government will deny the company the environmental approvals.

Mr Kelly’s grandson Brian believes the stakes are simply too high to leave any stone unturned.

“If this goes ahead, there will be nothing there when we go look around,” he said.

“We need to think about future generations,” elder Michael Jones said, reminding everyone that remote communities in the region have struggled for water before.

“We moved to Alekarenge because there was no water. Old people carted water from Seven Mile to town. We don’t want that to happen to our next generation. Where will our young ones go?”

Mpwerempwer’s decision not to give up comes after the NT Supreme Court dismissed its appeal against the licence.

The judges ruled in May that the NT government did not have to follow the Western Davenport Water Allocation Plan when it gave the licence and that it can leave important regulations for later.

They also said the government did not need to talk to Mpwerempwer and the CLC about sacred site protection conditions in as much detail as it talked to the company about those conditions.

A High Court appeal against this decision and the EPA assessment are not the only things on the minds of the traditional owners.

Mr Jones is worried that the new Territory Coordinator, an unelected NT bureaucrat with vast powers, could try to intervene.



Ned Kelly (second from right) travelled to the Supreme Court in Darwin last year to protest against the Singleton water licence.

“That Territory Coordinator, he won’t listen to anyone. He doesn’t need to talk to anyone, doesn’t need to talk to traditional owners,” he said.

The Territory Coordinator has to consider economic development before everything else.

Fortune Agribusiness has promised to create lots of jobs and money for the NT, but experts say these claims

are greatly exaggerated.

More than five years after the traditional owners first spoke up against the Singleton water licence, their battle continues.

More than five years after they first spoke up against the Singleton water licence, the battle seems to have only just begun.



New protected area gives Anangu “our own voice”

THE CENTRAL Western Desert Indigenous Protected Area was a long time coming, calling for two days of celebrations.

During one of the hottest March weeks in living memory, hundreds of traditional owners and their supporters gathered at Ilpili, a significant water site in the middle of Australia's newest IPA.

As their people had for tens of thousands of years, they came from all over the four million hectare area and beyond to perform ceremonies and introduce a new generation to their country.

They also signed an agreement with the Australian government to look after it for all Australians.

The two permanent springs seeping from Ilpili's limestone make it an important gathering place.

The site lies between Walungurru (Kintore) and Watiyawanu (Mount Liebig), and is Papunya elder Karyn McDonald's grandmother's country.

“This is an important sacred place,” she said.

“Last night I was crying because I was remembering how my ancestors used to stay around this area. And it was really difficult, winter season and hot season, to look around for food.

When I came here I felt my ancestors whispering to me. I felt my tears,” she said.

“We're really proud to look after the country, the rock holes, water holes and all the animals, for the kids' future. For them to learn from us so they can pass it on to the future

between them, following an IPA management plan.

For the IPA management committee, getting rid of buffel grass and camels is of the utmost importance.

It's the “main thing” for IPA committee member Patrick Collins, and why he signed up for the

The celebration was the reward for all the work traditional owners and the Central Land Council started in 2017.

“We're happy today,” Mr Collins, a CLC delegate from Watiyawanu, said after he signed the agreement.

“We're trying to look after country. We travel around and see all the kids and get all the rangers to work with us to fix my country.”

School kids from his community spent the first morning of the gathering in the sand dunes north of Ilpili, learning how to track animals from kuyu pungu (master trackers) from Kiwirrkurra, Nyirrpri and Yuendumu.

“We want to learn the kids to carry on what we're doing, so we're passing story on to the kids and they can pass on the story when they grow up,” Mr Collins said.

“We've been learning with our grandmother and father how to catch kangaroo and goanna. We want to learn the kids to track animals, which way the animals are going, which way they are turning, see fresh tracks and old tracks. ‘Oh, we might follow fresh tracks’. So we are following the right track. ‘It must be here, where the fresh track is’.”

“We're really proud to look after the country, the rock holes, water holes and all the animals, for the kids' future. For them to learn from us so they can pass it on to the future generations.”

generations,” Ms McDonald said.

She said feral camels pose the main threat to Ilpili's springs.

“They just come, drink, have a bath. That's how they are spoiling our water holes. The rock holes as well. We need to keep our country safe.”

Ms McDonald wants the Anangu Luritjiku and Walungurru ranger groups to “listen to the traditional owners” as they look after country

Australian Government funds that will flow with the IPA agreement.

“Water first, before we can come and look after country. Camels always smashing all the water. We need someone to help us. That's why we're trying to get someone to give us a little bit of money and work with us to look after the water and push all the camels to somewhere else.”



Kuyu pungu Mantua Nangala (with orange beanie) and Christine Michaels Ellis taught the kungka (girls) how to track.



Shasharlee and other Watiyawanu students brought their digging sticks to track in the sand dunes near Ilpili. Photo Mike Bowers.

After a couple of hours of tracking in more than 40 degrees heat everyone retreated to whatever shade they could find.

Luritja interpreters helped the kids to relax with kuyu pungu Christine Michaels Ellis, her mum Alice Henwood and Enid Gallagher, who talked to them in Warlpiri.

"I was really happy with these kids," Ms Michaels Ellis said.

"We asked them to recount. That's what we always do with our rangers. They recounted back to us what they had seen today – snakes, camel tracks, fox tracks, sand goanna, scorpion burrows and centipedes, and old cat tracks as well. And they were really happy. It was really great.

"I told them tracking is really important so they can pass on the knowledge from the old people. Without the elders there will be no more tracking, so they have to pass knowledge to the young people."

Students from across the IPA prepared for the big day by practising purlapa (ceremony) with the elders, and some carved and painted their own small digging sticks.

The rangers of tomorrow visited rock holes to learn from elders and scientists how to test the water quality and keep them clean.

"If they become a ranger they can learn their kids," Ms Ellis Michaels said.

"If they haven't got songlines they have to record it. That's what Warlpiri people do at Yuendumu. They get records from the old people, and take it to PAW [Pintupi Warlpiri Anmatyerr Media], and they save it."

With precious cultural knowledge and nine threatened animal species to protect on the IPA, the rangers have their work cut out.

Those who have to make it all happen feel up to the task.

"This IPA gives us our own voice and brings all the communities together in managing our land."

"We've got the princess parrot, the (central) rock rats, and we've got the great desert skink in these areas, but there's so many other more projects that we have planned," the coordinator of the Papunya-based Anangu Luritjiku Rangers, Lynda Lechleitner, told the ABC.

"This IPA gives us our own voice and brings all the communities together in managing our land," she beamed.

"It's also going to make it faster to deliver our work on the ground

because we are all working towards the same plan."

The IPA program is an Australian government initiative that has helped Aboriginal people look after the unique natural and cultural values of their land since 1997.

Under the Central Western Desert IPA agreement the CLC will receive approximately \$1.7 million for four years to help traditional owners and rangers to protect country and culture.



Lester from Watiyawanu got ready for inma. Photo Mike Bowers.



Drones, data and desert skies: rangers embrace new tech



Rangers Bentley Brown, Kevin Abbott, Andy Mbitjana and Jeremian Okai practiced using drones to survey country.

RAIN, mud and thick clouds didn't stop Aboriginal rangers from learning new ways to care for country at this year's Central Land Council ranger camp.

For three days, the camp at Ross River, east of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), was alive with the buzz of drones, digital maps and new ideas.

Rangers from across Central Australia tested new gear, tackled weeds and feral animals and shared stories around the fire.

Flying drones was a first for Preston Kelly from the CLC's Ranger Works team.

After trying out different types of drones, he picked the mid-sized drone as his favourite.

"It'll be easier for doing site surveys near the hills," he said.

"Save us from having to run around in the scrub. We can go down with the drone and check the creek line."

Rangers learned how to use drones to check waterholes, map fire scars, inspect fences and track wildlife.

Utopia ranger Andy Mbitjana said the drone training built on what he already knew.

"It's good to get more training to use drones for our work," he said.

Mapping was another focus. Indigenous mapping company Winyama showed rangers how to use Google Earth Pro to track animals, survey plants and plan jobs.

Aputula ranger Jolene Doolan said mapping country in a new way would help pass knowledge on to more tech-savvy, younger people.

"This way of mapping is different. It's new to us. I've learned everything — how to take a picture, drag it into the internet and create a story using Google mapping," she said.

"Looking after the country and teaching young kids — the mapping is going to help with that a lot."

For the first time, female rangers trained in women-only groups.

Huddled under rain shelters, they practised together, encouraged each other and became more confident around drones and iPads.

Annalee Lathois, from Papunya's Anangu Luritjiku ranger group, enjoyed learning with other women "about mapping on the iPad, camera traps and using drones".

"We can check what sites we need to go out to with the drone first — see if the water's okay and if not, go fix it," she said.

The training left Anne Marie Waistcoat wanting more.

"I want to get more used to doing mapping on the iPad," said the Muru-Warinyi Ankkul ranger from Tennant Creek.

That includes more women-only sessions.

"There are no gentlemen around us, so we can make jokes and feel comfortable around each other."

"It was good for the women to sit around and get to know each other better. See different groups and get to meet up with them and introduce ourselves," she said.

"There are no gentlemen around us, so we can make jokes and feel comfortable around each other."

The camp also prepared the rangers to fight major threats like weeds and feral animals.

On top of Aputula ranger John Campbell's list are feral cats "killing native animals".

"Back home I see their eyes flash on the road when we're driving at night. More and more cats because they breed too quickly. We need to get rid of them — they're destroying the small creatures," he said.

While some rangers practised tracking and baiting cats and foxes, others focussed on a different kind of invasive species — weeds.

Warlpiri ranger group coordinator Jordan O'Brien learned how to safely use chemicals used to eradicate buffel grass and rubber bush, a fast-spreading weed around Yuendumu.

"It's from India, but it's here choking all the native plants," he said.

"We were just cutting or ripping them out of the ground and burning them. I wasn't spraying because I didn't know anything about chemicals."

Now he can mix poison with diesel



Jeffrey Curtis, from the Muru-Warinyi Ankkul Rangers, showed the team how to safely handle a poisonous snake.



Ranger Shabella Rambler at the women-only drone training workshop.

to spray rubber bush.

“We need to get rid of it. There’s too much of it now — spreading around Yuendumu and heading to Nyirrpipi. We’ve got to smash it out before it spreads more.”

Rangers from NT Parks and Wildlife,

the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and the Ngaanyatjarra Council joined the CLC’s 14 ranger groups at the annual camp for training ranging from first aid to snake handling and data collection.



Anmatyerr Ranger Bevan Pepperill controls his drone at the CLC ranger camp at Ross River.

CLP’s broken promise leaves our rangers in the lurch

THE COUNTRY Liberal Party government’s decision to break its \$12 million Aboriginal ranger grant election promise is putting jobs, cultural knowledge and land management at risk across the Territory.

“The CLP is making a habit of betraying the trust of Aboriginal people,” CLC chair Warren Williams said.

“This is a slap in the face of the rangers who are out there managing country on the smell of an oily rag, protecting sacred sites and fighting fires, weeds and feral pests in some of the most remote areas of the Territory,” he said.

Former opposition spokesperson for Parks and Rangers Bill Yan, now the NT’s treasurer, said just before last year’s NT election that the CLP would continue Labor’s ranger grants.

He promised to deliver \$3 million annually over four years to support Aboriginal rangers with critical training, equipment and infrastructure upgrades and job security — exactly as the previous Labor government had done for eight years.

Paddy O’Leary, the chief executive of Country Needs People, counted on him to keep his word.

“We were actually shocked that a government would so clearly promise, very directly, to fund a specific program unambiguously and without conditions, and then

turn around in their first budget and break that promise,” Mr O’Leary said.

He said the backflip means rangers across the Territory won’t be able to afford the repairs, spray packs and protective equipment they need to do the job.

The CLC employs more than 90 rangers across 14 groups.

Mr Williams said their work “benefits all Territorians — from tackling feral pests to reducing carbon emissions — and the government’s broken promise puts this work and these jobs in jeopardy”.

Top End rangers are “outraged at this broken promise”, Northern Land Council chair Matthew Ryan said, adding that they were already significantly under-resourced to properly manage land and sea country.

“Fewer opportunities for communities that really don’t have many other opportunities.”

“This government has revealed its plans to leave Aboriginal rangers behind,” he said.

Much of the Aboriginal ranger programs are funded by the federal government, but the ranger grants of the NT government have made the difference between groups limping along and thriving.

“Rangers will definitely scale back some of their activities, such as fighting weeds and tackling buffel grass, protection of sacred sites, which will mean fewer jobs on the ground,” said the CLC’s ranger program manager, Boyd Elston.

“Fewer opportunities for communities that really don’t have many other opportunities.”

“We were really shocked that the government would cut that kind of investment with so many positive outcomes. Kids want to be rangers and have the opportunities to move into those positions.”

NT environment minister Joshua Burgoyne said funding had been exhausted.

“Our government’s number one priority is law and order, including spending on frontline priorities such as police, courts and corrections.”

He said the CLP would “continue to work with Aboriginal ranger groups across the Territory to ensure we can support them in their important work moving forward”.

Mr Williams wants nothing less than a full reinstatement of the ranger grants.

“Your fine words before the election about supporting the bush ring hollow when you turn your backs on one of the proven success stories in remote community development as soon as the election is over,” he said.

“Our rangers and the country they care for deserve better. They will remember your backflip, as will voters.”



Biggest-ever skink survey marches on

EVERY year around Easter, Aboriginal ranger groups from across the desert come together for Mulyamiji March. It's the largest threatened species monitoring effort in the heart of Australia.

The cross-border survey focuses on the iconic and culturally significant Great Desert Skink.

"There's kuna from today. They was playing around and they gone inside the burrow," she said..

The Walungurru Rangers surveyed five tjalapa sites they had already visited in 2023 and 2024.

Rangers also record signs of feral cats and foxes. The tjalapa is under threat from uncontrolled wildfires and

we know where we can find them – out in the spinifex plains, that's where they live. I learnt how to track from my mother," kuyu pungu (expert tracker) Enid Gallagher explained.

Ms Gallagher said it is important to take young people tracking.

"If we find warrarna and we have some young people with us, we can teach them the tracks and the area that they live and where you can find them easy.

"When we went on this survey this morning, we did that worksheet from Reading the Country about warrarna and Yuendumu rangers they knew what it was. But the other one from Lajamanu said this was the first time he had seen the warrarna and the first time he was doing this survey," she said.

Fellow Warlpiri ranger Travis Penn wants to protect the skink.

"The warrarna is kind of endangered, so we come out and do a survey. We need to try and look after them a bit more."

"They all go in the same area – their own little toilet area. Usually about three or four in each site, but at one

"I hadn't used it before, so yeah, it was good to use that. I don't mind using it. There's other ranger groups – about 16 – around the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia doing the survey.

"We're walking everywhere, in a line all together, everybody. Find one and sing out."

"I love being a ranger, going out bush, looking after country. I always wanted to get this job," he said.

Now in its third year, Mulyamiji March is not only helping researchers understand how the Great Desert Skink is faring – it is also strengthening cultural knowledge, ranger networks and the skills of the next generation of land managers.

As the threats of fire and feral animals increase, monitoring and



Marlene Spencer dug up a tjalapa.

Known as mulyamiji, tjakura, tjalapa, warrarna and nampu in different languages across the desert, this rare skink lives mostly on Aboriginal land. It holds strong tjukurrpa (dreaming) for many desert peoples.

This year, 16 Aboriginal ranger teams from the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia took part. Each team walked the same-sized survey plots, recorded the same kind of data and contributed to a better picture of how skink populations track across the desert.

Rangers used their expert knowledge to search for tell-tale signs – kuna (scat), tracks and burrows – and recorded what they found with a data collection app on their tablets.

The app helps researchers combine findings from across different sites. Once they spot a burrow, the rangers work out if tjalapa live inside, how many and how old they are.

Walungurru traditional owner Pelita Wakuri used her tracking skills to decide she had found an active burrow.

feral animals, but continues to thrive where the rangers carry out patchwork burning during the cool season and control ferals.

Surveying is hot work, but rangers and traditional owners have to do them while the weather is still warm, because tjalapa go to sleep during winter.

Luckily for the Walungurru team, the week started out cool and overcast. Traditional owner Marlene Spencer dug up a tjalapa for everyone to see.

As the hot weather crept back in later, the team marched across the spinifex sands in search of tjalapa burrows and finished all five survey sites, picking up camera traps on the way.

"We walking everywhere, in a line all together, everybody. Find one and sing out," Walungurru ranger Michael Wheeler said.

Meanwhile on the eastern edge of the desert, the Warlpiri Rangers were surveying warrarna in the Tanami.

"It looks like a blue tongue lizard but it's orange. We look for tracks and



Travis Penn picked up new skills using the app to collect the survey data.

spot we found like 13 burrows. It's important to do the survey to check on the numbers."

Mr Penn liked to use the app to record his data, knowing that rangers from across the desert were doing the same work at the same time.

protecting skinks is more important than ever – and the rangers' vital work is powered by deep, local knowledge and connection to country.



America to Alice: a shared journey to save our languages



Sashanna Armstrong and son Tyrique shared language revival tips with Micah, Keland and Zoday Bearclaw.

KEEPING a language alive takes a dedicated community.

The Pertame School in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) is working to achieve just that, inspired by the Yuchi people from Oklahoma in the southeast of the United States of America.

Earlier this year, the school welcomed experts from the Yuchi Immersion School, where people ages three months to 80 years learn only in their first language.

The school's director, Richard Grounds, told his Australian hosts that Yuchi children are now growing up as fluent speakers for the first time in 100 years.

The Pertame language belongs to the land around the Lhere Pirnta (Finke) and Lhere Totinjia (Hugh) rivers, south of Mparntwe. There are fewer than 30 fluent speakers of Pertame, all grandparents and great-grandparents.

One of them is Christobel Swan, who used to take children on country to pass on her language and dreams of a Pertame revival.

The Batchelor Institute Language Centre has helped her granddaughter, Vanessa Farrelly, to make this dream come true.

Ms Farrelly, the administrator of the Pertame School, met Mr Grounds at the Global Indigenous Language Conference in New York in 2019.

He told her that the Yuchi school is all about 'living the language'.

"We are using the language to do activities, games, and teachings through demonstrations," Mr Grounds explained.

"Our languages are healing, our languages are medicine."

"If we want our young people to be strong, they need to know who they are. Our languages are healing, our languages are medicine," he said.

Later, Ms Farrelly, Sashanna and Samantha Armstrong visited his school and realised the importance of full immersion. They saw children learning maths, science, reading and writing entirely in Yuchi.

"We went to bed, and our heads were ringing with Yuchi. We knew this was the way forward," Ms Farrelly said.

Yuchi's parents, Micha and Keland Bearclaw, told them that a school alone is not enough and that it takes a whole community.

"When children hear and speak their language all day at school, they

naturally bring it home. When parents commit to speaking it at home, that's when real success happens. We are bringing it back to the community," Ms Bearclaw said.

"With a handful of fluent speakers left, we can't waste time on a dictionary or an app. We needed committed young people speaking nothing but language to transfer the elders' knowledge," said Ms Farrelly.

Back in Mparntwe, the women set out to build their own immersion school.

They have spent years learning directly from their elders.

"We are by no means fluent, but we have our elders to correct us when we need.

"It's the quality of what they know, not the quantity of people learning it. We can't wait until we're 100 per cent fluent to start teaching. It would be too late," she said.

Ms Farrelly hopes more young parents will speak Pertame at home with their babies.

Sashanna Armstrong, one of the dedicated mothers working at the school, said speaking Pertame at home makes all the difference.

"Before, I was not really exposed to my language. We are opening up to another world compared to what I grew up in. I now speak Pertame to

my son at home to give him a sense of identity."

Today, the school at the Batchelor Institute at the Desert Knowledge Precinct welcomes children of all ages with a preschool playgroup, an after-school program and evening classes for adults.

"We still have a long way to go, but we are working every day to save our Pertame language. Seventy-eight language groups in Australia still have a handful of fluent elders," Ms Farrelly said.

With a strong community and committed parents, our languages have a fighting chance to thrive for generations.

More info at www.pertameschool.org

keep up with the latest news

like us on facebook

www.fb.com/CentralLandCouncil

THE 90 DELEGATES OF THE CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL



GEOFFREY MATTHEWS
Lajamanu



JESSIE COOK
Mistake Creek



TIMOTHEA PALMER
Dagaragu homelands



DIANNE KING
Dagaragu



CYRIL TASMAN
Lajamanu homelands



JUANITA ROGERS
Bamboo Springs



LEAH LEAMAN
Dagaragu homelands



SHARON ANDERSON
Lajamanu

3



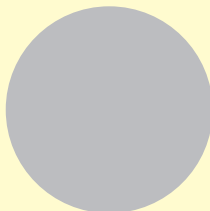
DEREK WILLIAMS
Yuendumu



VACANT
Kiripi



VALERIE MARTIN
Yuendumu homelands



VACANT
Mount Barkly

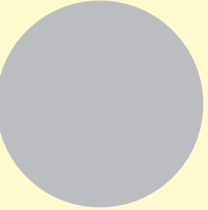


BELINDA WAYNE
Yuendumu

4



PEGGY GRANITES
Tanami Downs



VACANT
Willowra



VACANT
Willowra



WARREN WILLIAMS
Yuendumu homelands



PATRICK WILLIAMS
Nyirpi

5



PATRICK COLLINS
Amundurmgu homelands



DALTON MCDONALD
Papunya



VICTOR ROBINSON
Walungurru homelands



ARNOLD BUTLER
Ikuntji homelands



TONY EGGLEY
Amundurmgu

2



DOUGLAS MULTA
Ikuntji



TERRENCE ABBOTT
Papunya homelands



JUSTIN CORBY
Walungurru



TERRY MORRIS
Mbunghara



JENNIFER BREDEN
Ukaka



BARNABY KUNIA
Kaltukatjara



LEROY LESTER
Mutitjulu



DAVID DOOLAN
Aputula and homelands



STEVEN ABBOTT
Thuiparta



NORMAN KULITJA
Kaltukatjara homelands



JACOB YARMA
Utju and homelands



ABRAHAM PADDY
Imanpa



KATHLEEN LUCKEY
Imanpa



RITA JINGO
Mutitjulu homelands



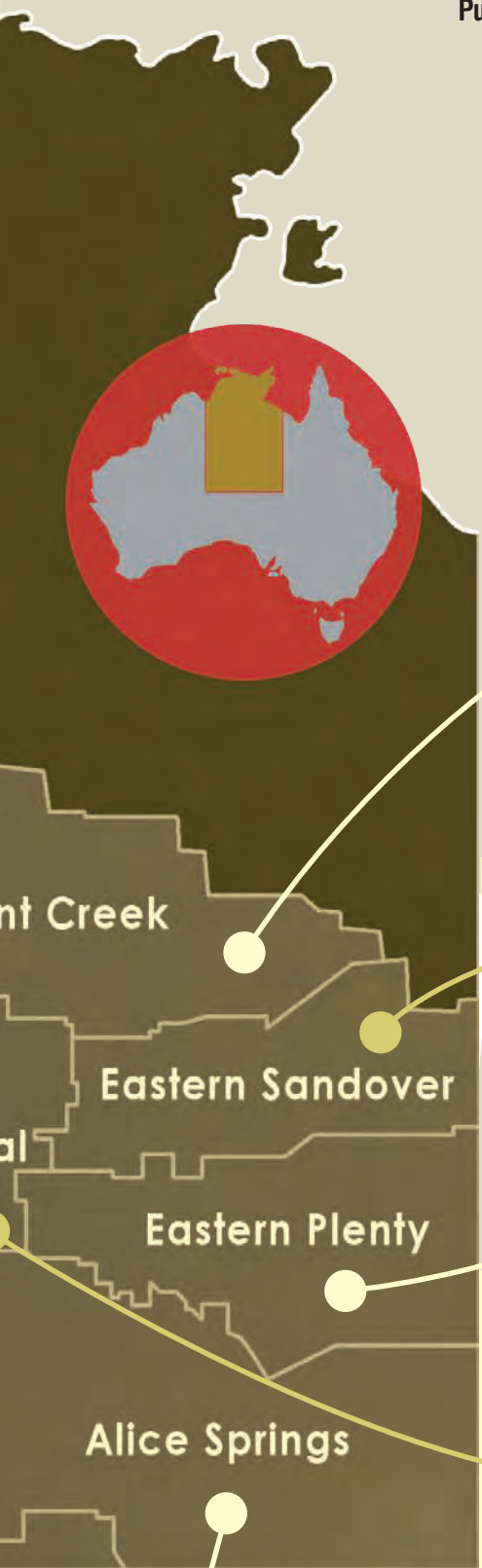
GWEN GILLEN
Watarrka homelands



HENRY OLIVER
Alice Springs homelands

YOUR
EXECUTIVE
MEMBER





VACANT
Purrukuwurru



RONALD BROWN
Kunayungku



GRAHAM BEASLEY
Alekarenge



JIMMY FRANK
Tennant Creek
native title holders



ANNIE MORRISON
Tennant Creek



MICHAEL JONES
Tennant Creek
native title holders



CAMUS CAMPBELL
Imangara



SANDRA MORRISON
Karlajarriyi



JORNA MURPHY
Ngurramanyi



BRIAN FREDDIE
Mangalawarra



JEREMIAH CORBETT
Wutunurrurga



LINDSAY DUGGIE
Mungkarta



PRISCILLA MICK
Canteen Creek

6



GRAHAM LONG
Utopia homelands



MALCOLM CLUB
Arparra



JACKIE MAHONEY
Alpururulam



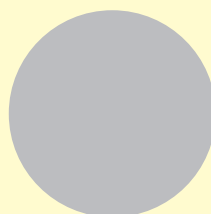
HARRIS LEWIS
Atnwengerrpe



JOYCE JONES
Utopia homelands



GARY FOWLER
Alpururulam



VACANT
Ampilatwatja



ESAU NELSON
Alparra



DANNY MILLS
Irrultja

7



NEVILLE PETRICK
Irrerlirre



CHRISTOPHER MADRILL
Akarnenhe Well



KEVIN BLOOMFIELD
Alcoota



MARIA ROSS
Mount Eaglebeak



ALBERT KUNOTH
Atitjere

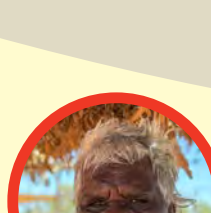
8



GERARD PEPPERILL
Yuelamu homelands



DAVID MCCORMACK
Yuelamu



TIMOTHY PRICE
Tara



LEANNE PRESLEY
Nturiya



ROSS PURVIS
Adelaide Bore

9



RAYMOND PALMER
Ltyentye Apurte



MARYANNE MALBUNKA
Tjuwanpa homelands



BARBARA SHAW
Tunkatjira (Alice Springs
town camps)



ROXANNE KENNY
Tjuwanpa homelands



ROSEANNE ELLIS
Ilmwernkenhe
(Amoonguna)



GERRY PRICE
Wilora



MALCOLM ROSS
Pmara Jutunta



BILLY BRISCOE
Laramba



PHILLIP JANIMA
Barrow Creek
homelands



PATRICK OLIVER
Yatemans Bore
homelands



MARK INKAMALA
Ntaria



CASEY KENNY
Tjuwanpa homelands



WILLIAM PALMER
Uruna



FRANCIS HAYES
Lhere Artepe
native title holders



INGRID WILLIAMS
Lhere Artepe
native title holders



GLEN SHARPE
Iwupataka



ANDREW WILYUKA
Titjikala



Native title holders launch booklets for better governance



The *Governance Story* booklets are the latest plain English resource developed with and for native title holders.

THE CENTRAL Land Council's new set of printed and online resources is helping native title holders to run their corporations with greater confidence.

Its eight colourful booklets make the idea of governance – how corporations organise themselves to get things done – easier to understand.



No flies on Rhonda Inkamala.

The CLC developed the *Governance Story* booklets with native title holders who gather every two years to learn more about running their corporations.

It launched them with more than 80 directors from 36 registered native title holder corporations – also known as Prescribed Bodies Corporate – at the CLC's fourth PBC Camp at Ross River in May.

They said during previous PBC camps that they had a hard time following some governance ideas.

"Directors told us they wanted resources in easy English with visual tools to help them understand and do their jobs – and they helped develop

and design them," CLC native title manager Francine McCarthy said.

The new booklets spell out in plain English and clear pictures what governance is, what directors have to do to keep their corporations on track, how to hold good meetings, make strong decisions, solve problems, look after money, keep records and plan ahead.

**"We said
'just imagine
we're talking to
our own mob'."**

"Well, we thought of making booklets because, you know, it's got a picture with the words. Just talking about PBC, a lot of our people won't get the picture and won't understand," Rodinga Aboriginal Corporation director Janet Turner said.

Ms Turner, who interpreted at previous PBC camps, saw the need for new resources.

"Even the PowerPoint presentations – it was just plain words, no pictures. A lot of our mob like to see the picture, because it gives them more understanding."

PBC directors helped the CLC to strip back the language.

"We had to lessen the words, make it shorter. We didn't want long sentences, just short and sweet," said Ms Turner.

"We said, 'just imagine we're talking to our own mob,'"

She first learned about governance through her mother's side when she became a director of the Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation. She then took her skills to the Rodinga Aboriginal Corporation, on her father's side.

"I wanted to share my learning with my dad's side as well," she said. "It was a good experience for me to work with my dad's family."

"It was rewarding because you're doing it so your people can understand, because you've got the picture and you've got the word. So putting that together makes it easier for our mob," she said.

"When they're reading it, they're looking at that picture side – there's action there."

Ms Turner also believes the booklets will make the job of interpreters at meetings easier.

Francine McCarthy said the new resources launch at the camp reflects a broader shift toward PBC-driven support.

"The PBC camp is about more than information delivery and training. It's about listening to what PBCs need and making sure we deliver."

The *Governance Story* booklets are available on the CLC web site and through the PBCmob app.



Barbara Shaw and Janet Turner presented the changes to the Northern Territory's sacred sites law at the camp.



New repatriation committee sets a high bar

THE CENTRAL Land Council has thanked the members of the committee advising the organisation on the return of sacred and significant objects of Central Australian Aboriginal people.

“Our council members have wanted to guide our repatriation work for some time and we are so grateful to the committee for taking the first step,” CLC chair Warren Williams said.

Six current and former CLC executive members have met regularly since 2023 to help the CLC develop the right policy and procedures for returning restricted and unrestricted objects and information collected about Aboriginal people.

“We formed this committee because we wanted to direct the anthropologists and consultants about

what we think is right for our people,” Ms Morrison said.

“The most important thing is getting objects coming back to our people once they have been identified.”

The repatriation committee has built relationships and shared knowledge with other organisations in this field, such as the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Strehlow Centre.

The committee’s first term finished during the CLC elections in March and the newly-elected executive will form a new committee to continue the job in June.

The next committee will focus on policy and procedures for returning photos, videos and other information held in the CLC’s archives.

It will also advise the CLC on how to deal with the growing number of access and repatriation requests it gets.

As more and more people understand that Aboriginal people are the rightful owners of a wide variety of objects and information, requests to the CLC to help them return these where they belong have increased.

That makes putting Aboriginal tradition, authority and communities front and centre when making decisions about Aboriginal objects all the more important.

“We like to have storage to keep our sacred objects [of men and women] in separate rooms,” said Ms Morrison.

Mr Williams, a member of the Warlpiri repatriation project in Yuendumu, shares the committee’s passion.

“I know how important it is to do this work in the most culturally safe and sensitive way. Our first repatriation committee has led the way and set a high bar for the next one.”



Geoffrey Matthews, Rebecca Koser, Sandra Morrison, Roseanne Ellis, Valerie Martin, Lily Mould, Neville Petrick and Martin Jugadai at a repatriation committee meeting late last year.

Painting a new chapter in Warlpiri education story



Success has many mothers: WETT advisory committee members told their story on canvas.

YAPA education leaders are marking the 20 years of the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust by once again turning to art to tell their story.

Twelve years after they created the first WETT painting the members of the trust’s advisory committee and Yapa researchers have completed a second artwork that captures how the trust has evolved and grown.

The original 2013 painting—created by WETT advisory committee members Barbara Martin, Nancy Oldfield and Maisie Kitson—charted the story of the trust’s beginnings and the first wave of initiatives to improve education outcomes in Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Willowra and Nyirrpri.

Over the years they presented reproductions of the original artwork at many conferences and workshops, to spread the word of this new way of working with royalty income.

The new painting tells the story of what has happened since.

“We all talk to each other in one of our WETT meetings. ‘Let’s do another one,’” founding member Barbara Martin said.

“That painting is old, and we’re telling what happened a long time ago. So this time, we should tell the story in this new painting — what we are doing right now, and what’s changed.”

The Central Land Council set up the WETT in 2005 because Yapa educators wanted to invest mining royalties from the Granites Mine in education and training in their communities.

Since then, the WETT has invested more than \$63 million in children and families, language and culture, youth development, secondary school support and learning community centre programs.

The new painting captures the growth of bilingual education program and the trust’s evolving partnerships with schools, training providers and other Aboriginal organisations since 2013.

It features a review which recognised the effectiveness of the trust after its first decade, a timeline of the history of bilingual education in the Tanami and related achievements, such as the Warlpiri Dictionary and continued development of the Warlpiri Theme Cycle curriculum.

It also shows the 2018 Indigenous Governance Award and the 2024 National NAIDOC Award it has won.

“We wanted to do a second painting, because there was lots and lots more of the projects happening

— to name a lot of other projects and show the things that are there now,” founding member Fiona Gibson said.

Like the original, the new painting is rich with meaning and symbolism. It is not only a record of achievements but declares that the trust remains rooted in Warlpiri values and accountable to Yapa. It is more than art—it is celebration and truth-telling rolled into one.



Fiona Gibson and Nickita Kelly worked on the new painting.

The painting will hang alongside the original to tell a continuing story of self-determination, community-led change and the strength of Warlpiri knowledge.

As Ms Martin put it: “Looking at the years—what we did first, and what happened next. How did we grow the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust by modelling different things? That’s what this new painting shows.”



Nancy Oldfield, Maisie Kitson and Barbara Martin created the first WETT painting in 2013.



Yuelamu artists paint a brighter future

YUELAMU residents are kick-starting their own art centre – Inkwareny Artists of Yuelamu – to share their culture and creativity and support their families.

Since the centre opened its doors in 2023, more than 50 artists have become members, painting, selling and showcasing their work.

"The kids can learn from us, from their elders. Maybe they'll take it over when they grow up."

Artists Lisa Cook and Rowena Larry split their time between painting and operating the art centre.

"It's great to have our own art gallery where visitors can come and see [our work]," Ms Cook said. "It's good to paint my dreaming and go out on country visits."

In its first year Inkwareny Artists sold 450 paintings, providing \$45,000 in direct income to the artists.

Before this, some artists travelled three hours to sell their work at

the Todd Mall in Alice Springs, while others drove 40 kilometres to Warlukurlangu Artists in Yuendumu.

"It's good to locate and pinpoint the art centre. To show where Yuelamu is and who's doing the paintings," artist Juliet Morris said.

"The artists are proud of it. It's change, good change."

The centre sells art at fair prices while helping to build a unique Yuelamu art identity.

The artists are also learning new skills, from canvas stretching and screen printing to pottery.

"It's about having fun and doing painting and showing the kids," Ms Larry said. "The kids can learn from us, from their elders. Maybe they'll take it over when they grow up. It's quite fun doing painting – patterns and dreaming for our country."

For the past two years, residents worked with the Central Land Council's community development team and the Wanta Aboriginal Corporation's social enterprise manager to set up the art centre.

Last December Inkwareny Artists became an incorporated organisation. The project was made possible



Rowena Larry and Lisa Cook worked at the art centre.

by the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation, which supports communities impacted by Newmont's Granites gold mine—Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Willowra, Nyirrpri, Yuelamu, Tanami Downs, Balgo, Ringer Soak and Billiluna.

Yuelamu's GMAAAC committee allocated \$264,000 to set up the centre and cover its operational costs from 2022 to 2024.

"It's good to have our own art centre and to work from here. Before, we had to go to Yuendumu," GMAAAC committee member Shonelle Stafford said.

Ms Cook has taken her art to the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair.

"I learned different kinds of skills for art. Some people came up and asked

us about our paintings," she said.

Yuelamu artists also participated in last year's Desert Mob event in Alice Springs and sold 80 per cent of their work at their first exhibition in Castlemaine, Victoria.

The GMAAAC committee allocated an additional \$71,000 to the project in 2024, which included \$10,000 to build a website, inkwarenyartists.com.

Launched last November, it helps the artists to sell and promote their work online.

The community is now working on plans for a dedicated art centre in a disused building.

"We want to renovate the old museum for our gallery – to sell our paintings and create art there," said Ms Larry.

Design plans featuring a gallery and art-making spaces are now complete and the local GMAAAC committee has applied for government funding to help with renovation costs.

Ms Morris is already planning ahead how to market Yuelamu's art at the turn-off to the Tanami Highway.

"When we have the new art centre, we'll put a sign on the road for visitors," she said.

Yapa teach culture and language on country

PAINTING up for ceremony, carving weapons and cooking lizards is all part of country visits for Yapa students.

Nyirrpri teacher Verona Jurrah says taking students out of the classroom keeps traditions strong.

"We teach kids how to track animals, cook, and understand where they live and what they eat," she said.

"We also share our jukurrpa—our dreaming stories—so they know who the caretakers and traditional owners are."

Each year, the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust funds week-long trips and culture days out bush near Lajamanu, Yuendumu, Willowra and Nyirrpri to support two-way learning.

Every year since 2005, the trust has invested more than \$6 million in royalties from Newmont's Granites gold mine in education and training initiative in these communities.

The funds support children and families, language and culture in schools, youth development, community learning centres and secondary school programs.

The trust pays more than 100 elders per year across the four schools to pass their knowledge to the next generation, spending a total of \$561,000 on country visit and elder payments between 2023 and 2025.

"It's important for children to learn how to speak to the land, keep our dreaming strong, and understand how dance connects to songlines."

Last year, 22 elders guided Nyirrpri students on two day trips, two overnight country visits and two culture days at school.

They visited 'old Nyirrpri', the site where the community was before it flooded and was moved to its current location.

"We went to sleep in old Nyirrpri and I been make spear - important for jukurrpa," said 10-year-old Elirio Michaels.

Men taught boys about ceremonies, body painting and carving shields and boomerangs.

"They found the wood and started the tool making in the bush, then came back to school to finish the tools off," Ms Jurrah, said.

"When they finished making the tools, they painted them up with a red ochre."

Ten-year-old Geoffrey Spencer understands the value of these skills.

"I like toolmaking and chopping sticks," he said. "When we get older, we're going to make it and keep going with our culture."

Willowra organised a culture day, and dozens of older residents taught students during four bush trips.

More than 50 students took part in three different ceremonies - purlapa, yawulyu and kurdiji. Each skin group painted up and performed.

The women painted the girls, while Kumanjayi Long led the men in painting the boys and teaching older boys how to prepare younger ones. Men from the Long and Ross families then performed ceremony with the boys.

"I felt happy dancing and getting painted up," said Colby Dickson, from Willowra.

"It's important for children to learn how to speak to the land, keep our dreaming strong, and understand how dance connects to songlines," Ms Jurrah said.

"Our songlines connect to the land and to us—it's inside us."



Willowra students painted up for the community's culture day.



Utju residents sing the praises of church makeover

UTJU is celebrating the restoration of its historic church, bringing new life to a place that has been at the heart of the community for generations. Thanks to major upgrades, the church is now cooler, more spacious, and more welcoming for worshippers.

Many locals who regularly care for the building and lead services were concerned about its poor condition.

"The church was really, really old and too hot for people to go to church," Lorraine Donald, Watarrka traditional owner said.

Now, brand new tiles have replaced the cracked concrete floor, air conditioning keeps the building cool, and a new storeroom with shelving provides much-needed space.

A concrete ramp at the entrance makes the building more accessible, two shade structures at the front offer a comfortable gathering area and the whole project is inviting praise.

"Nice job, the church looks good now," said Ms Donald, who has noticed more people attending services since the upgrades.

"Before [the church was fixed up] some stayed at home, some went. Now more people go. We're really happy that the church is fixed up."

Elder Anawari Winmati, another working group member, recalls how the building played a different role in the past.

"That church was the school before," said Ms Winmati. "Long time ago, the school moved and it became the church, maybe around the 1940s."



Rene Cooper, Louise Coulthard, Irene Carroll, Lorraine Donald and Anawari Winmati at the Utju Church.

For many residents of the community, 240 kilometres west of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), the church is more than just a building. It's a place of connection, learning, and faith.

"We always go to church every Sunday, our whole lives. It gives us a good feeling. We teach our kids. The ladies here they run the church even when there is no ingkata (priest)."

Working group member Sarah Gallagher remembers going to the church as a little girl.

"My mum was a pastor and she looked after the church here a long time ago. The church building then had no air conditioning, so it wasn't really comfortable. It wasn't good for the community."

"When community development came along, it changed our church," she said. "The people in the community think it's really amazing."

"Now the church is a really happy place, and we've got air conditioning. The kids and the babies used to cry when they were hot [in the church], but now they're happy running around. More people going to church every Sunday. Now the people are really happy

and smile when they go to church every Sunday."

In 2010, traditional owners leased 16 jointly managed national parks and reserves in the CLC region to the NT government.

They have used all the rent they got for these parks to fund community projects, supported by the Central Land Council's community development unit.

The working group allocated \$124,000 of Utju's parks rent in 2021, and Tangentyere Constructions completed the renovations last September.

Now the church stands strong and ready to serve future generations. The silver metal of the restored building gleams in the sun.

Resident Hilda Burt is enjoying the new improvements.

"It's better now we've got tiles. Before it was a bit rough, the cement. We always had to clean the floor. Now it's tiles and it looks all right," she said.

"They fixed two rooms and put in drawers so that we can keep the hymn books and bibles in order. I'm happy that these ladies did a good job, and that the land council helped us to renovate the church."

During the winter months, when the church fills with gospel singing, Ms Burt and Ms Donald are part of the choir. They would like to make more improvements.

"Sometimes we have gospel night and people sit on the ground outside. More seats would be good," Ms Burt said.

"Hopefully, for the next round of community development, the working group can plan for that."



"My mum was a pastor and she looked after the church here a long time ago."

Joy Kunia, the church caretaker, is a member of the working group member that planned the upgrade.

"It used to be a little old church built maybe in missionary times. Whenever there was a big rain the roof would leak," she said.

"Everything's fixed now and it looks good. We had a rain last month and saw there was no more leaking."

The Watarrka traditional owners pushed for these repairs, knowing how important the church is to Utju's history and culture.

Engawala students find their rhythm in music workshops



Kutch Edwards leads music workshops with Engawala community.

MUSIC has always been a big part of life in Engawala.

Now young people have tuned into learning, creating and performing music, thanks to a workshop with some of Australia's best.

Coloured Stone band members Jason Lee Scott and Bunna Lawrie, singer-songwriter Kutch Edwards and producer Dave Walker, from Capel Sound Studios, led a three-day music workshop at Alcoota School, where students explored instruments, songwriting, and recording.

The highlight was a concert under the stars at Engawala's central park, where young performers shared the stage with the seasoned artists.

The students prepared for the concert by experimenting with different instruments, writing their own songs and recording their music with the industry professionals.

The visitors turned the classroom into a makeshift studio to teach how songs are put together from start to finish.

Traditional owner Joy Turner was happy to see the students so engaged.

"The kids enjoyed the learning and the workshops to make the music. It was fun to watch the kids enjoy themselves," she said.

Families and friends from Engawala, Atitjere and Arlparra gathered as the students opened the show with choir performances and band sets, proudly showing off their new skills.

Local favourites, the MB Reggae Band and the New Boys, got the crowd moving.

Kutch Edwards led the audience in a powerful singalong with all of the

students onstage.

Coloured Stone, backed by the MB Reggae Band, kept the crowd dancing to their biggest hits until the last note.

Leanne Dodd, whose niece and nephews performed on stage, loved how the show brought everybody to their feet.

"It was fun to watch the kids enjoy themselves."

"Everybody was dancing for Coloured Stone, not only the kids but the adults too," she said.

The community funded the workshops and performance through a trial of the Central Land Council and the Indigenous Australians Agency that started in 2020.

The trial aims to support community projects by matching dollar-for-dollar the money Aboriginal groups invest, using their income from land use agreements.

Engawala allocated \$22,000 of its matched funds income to the project.

“We got that land back”: Wakaya Alyawarre families celebrate historic handback

THE RETURN of Wakaya Alyawarre country to its rightful owners was a moment more than four decades in the making. Minister for Indigenous Australians, Malarndirri McCarthy, ended a 44 year wait for justice when, waving off the flies, she handed over the title deeds to the families gathered at a homeland near Canteen Creek.



Indigenous Australians Minister Malarndirri McCarthy (front and centre) delivered the title deeds to their country to the Wakaya Alyawarre traditional owners at a ceremony near Canteen Creek.

The descendants of the traditional owners on whose behalf the Central Land Council lodged the claim danced, spoke and cried as they witnessed the handback of their land. Senator McCarthy acknowledged both the loss of their loved ones and the long legacy of the claim.



“I know that there are many traditional owners who are no longer with us, but I also know that we have our younger generation and the next generations now who need to know this story and that 44 years of struggle,” she said. All 4,840 square kilometres of what became known as the Wakaya-Alyawarre Land Claim No.

130 — the CLC’s second-last land claim— are now under inalienable Aboriginal freehold title. Eileen Bonney, the only surviving member of the original claimant group, reflected on the long road to justice. “I was trying to get this land back for a long time. I was keep on trying for it for a long time. Keep coming back to every meeting. At last we got it, we got that land back,” she said. “We was waiting to get that title. My mother’s father’s country. I’m happy about it. I’m proud of myself. It’s a long time I was talking, fighting every time. They pick me up and bring me to meetings. Nothing happened. Only today, 2025 — it’s happening, today, 44 years later.” The CLC lodged the original claim in 1980. It took ten years for the Aboriginal Land Commissioner to recommend granting two parcels of land, which were eventually returned as Aboriginal freehold title, but he excluded most of the land under claim, a large parcel — in the middle. The CLC immediately claimed that parcel again. After a second hearing, 17 years later, the commissioner found that if a full inquiry were held, he would likely recommend the grant after all. This prompted the NT government to offer to settle the claim through an Indigenous Land Use Agreement.

CLC staff and consultants worked closely with traditional owners, Canteen Creek residents and the government, consulting repeatedly about future land tenure and governance in the community. In 2017, the traditional owners consented to the ILUA which granted some parts of the town as ordinary freehold title to an Aboriginal corporation. Two years later, the CLC delegates certified the agreement.

“I’m proud of myself. It’s a long time I was talking, fighting every time.”

The NT government supported the granting of the land as Aboriginal freehold title and the National Indigenous Australians Agency then surveyed it. Late last year, the Australian Parliament passed the bill, just in time for Christmas. CLC chair Warren Williams paid tribute to all the families who never gave up. “It’s been a long time that you fought for this land and now it’s here in your hands today. You have waited so long for today’s handback,” he said. “The residents of Canteen Creek have worked so hard to build their community surrounded by the claim area. By working together you have all helped to make this day possible.” Mr Williams also acknowledged that the land claim era is almost over. “The Wakaya Alyawarre land claim is one of our last two outstanding claims under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act,” he said.



Antarrengeny, Akwerrenty and Aharreng men sang while Alangkwa and Atetyamper men danced the Althart (men’s dance).

“During its proud 50-year history, the Central Land Council has won back more than half the land in the southern half of the Northern Territory for its traditional owners, and today we are making history again.”





Continued from p.2

“Let me be clear: Only money will force the NT government to act. Our lives are worth less than a chocolate bar to those in power and money is the only language they understand.”

He called for Ms McCarthy to respond quickly.

“I hope the minister supports our request and ensures the coroner is well-resourced so they can conclude their inquest within a year,” he said.

CLC chief executive, Les Turner asked how this death could happen, more than 30 years after the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended that complaints against police be investigated by an independent body.

“That an alleged shoplifting attempt by a cognitively impaired person ended in his death tells us that, tragically, too little has been learnt from the past.”

The Country Liberal Party government has been in office for less than a year and has already broken multiple promises to Aboriginal communities, while the CLC remains very concerned about the rates of incarceration and child removals.

“We don’t trust this government and its police force to keep us safe,” Mr Williams said.

“NT police talk of reform and anti-racism strategies is just that - talk. It’s time for the federal government to hold the NT accountable and force the change we so desperately need.”



Defence force personnel presented CLC chair Warren Williams with a wreath to pay their respects and acknowledge his loss.

Police racism: NT force to review itself in another broken promise

THE NT government has scrapped an independent review into systemic racism in the police force, leaving police to – once again – investigate themselves.

The move comes weeks after the death in police custody of Kumanjayi White, and two years after the review was announced at the inquest of Kumanjayi Walker.

NT Attorney-General Marie Boothby said the \$300,000 the previous Labor government had committed to the NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to investigate police racism had been cut.

She said the review would instead be wrapped into a new anti-racism strategy being developed by the police.

Her admission prompted Chansey Paech to ask in Parliament whether

“police will be reviewing police about racism in the police force”.

Mr Paech was attorney-general of the former NT government that promised in 2021 to identify and eliminate systemic racism in government agencies as part of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

“Police will be reviewing police about racism in the police force.”

Labor and the Country Liberal Party both signed the agreement.

The coronial inquest into the police shooting death of Kumanjayi Walker heard in 2023 that every NT government agency would be examined.

“We need to accept that systemic racism exists in the systems that have been built, with the history we have in the NT, and we need to make sure we eliminate it,” former director of the NT government's Aboriginal Justice Unit, Leanne Liddle, said at the time.

Ms Boothby said in mid-June that although the anti-discrimination commissioner's review into police racism had been scrapped, “work is being led by Leanne Liddle ... covering a broad range of initiatives” within the NT police.

Last August, when former NT police commissioner Michael Murphy apologised at Garma to First Nations people, he said Ms Liddle would develop an internal anti-racism strategy through her current

role in the force.

The NT’s independent anti-corruption commissioner and police jointly investigated allegations of racism within the force in 2024.

The investigation was sparked by racist police awards that emerged during the coronial inquest into Kumanjayi Walker's death.

It found no further evidence of racist behaviour since 2015 and reported the matter should be closed.

Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro has repeatedly said the CLP does not believe there is systemic racism in the police and “can’t understand” why Aboriginal Territorians don’t trust the police.

desart PRESENTS

DESERTMOB

ARLPWE ART AND CULTURE CENTRE

ARTISTS OF AMPILATWATJA

BARKLY REGIONAL ARTS

BINDI MWERRE ANTHURRE ARTISTS

ENGAWALA ART CENTRE

ERNABELLA ARTS

GREENBUSH ART GROUP

HERMANNSBURG POTTERS

IKUNTJI ARTISTS

ILTJA NTJARRA (MANY HANDS) ART CENTRE

INKWARENY ARTISTS OF YUELAMU

IWANTJA ARTS

KALTJITI ARTS

KERINGKE ARTS

LTYENTYE APURTE TRADITIONAL CRAFT CENTRE

MARTUMILI ARTISTS

MARUKU ARTS

MIMILI MAKU ARTS

MINYMA KUTJARA ARTS PROJECT

NINUKU ARTS

NYINKKA NYUNYU ART & CULTURE CENTRE

PAPULANKUTJA ARTISTS

PAPUNYA TJUPI ARTS

PAPUNYA TULA ARTISTS

SPINIFEX ARTS PROJECT

TANGENTYERE ARTISTS

TAPATJATJAKA ART & CRAFT

TJALA ARTS

TJANPI DESERT WEAVERS

TJARLIRLI AND KALTUKATJARA ART

TJUNGU PALYA

UTOPIA ART CENTRE

WARAKURNA ARTISTS

WARLUKURLANGU ARTISTS

YARRENTY ARLTERE ARTISTS

EXHIBITION + ARTIST TALKS + MARKETPLACE + PUBLIC PROGRAMS + SATELLITE EVENTS

11 SEPTEMBER - 26 OCTOBER 2025

MPARNTWE WWW.DESERTMOB.COM

Any questions about CLC business? Call your region's office

1. ALICE SPRINGS
Shawn Foster
8951 6264

6. TENNANT CREEK
Darryl "Tiger" Fitz
8951 0541

2. SOUTH WEST
Shane Stirling
8951 0577

7. EASTERN SANDOVER
Cyril Kunoth
8951 0606

3. NORTH WEST
Glen Woods
8951 6255

8. EASTERN PLENTY
Richard Dodd
8951 0622

4. TANAMI
Amos Egan
8951 0581

9. CENTRAL
Nathan Pepperill
8951 6339

5. WEST
Vacant
8951 6255



Wakaya Alyawarre traditional owners waited 44 years for the title deeds to their country.



Aliyah, from Watiyawanu, danced with the women and girls as they celebrated the Central Western Desert Indigenous Protected Area in March.



Cyril Tasman was a strong voice for Lajamanu homelands at his first council meeting.



Mick Walters and Lynette Ross from the Batchelor Institute presented Joanne Kunoth with a certificate at the CLC ranger camp.



Ryan Abbott posed with a tjalapa during Mulyamiji March.



Central Western Desert IPA traditional owner Linda Anderson worked on the management plan for her country.



Elders painted up the girls for inma.



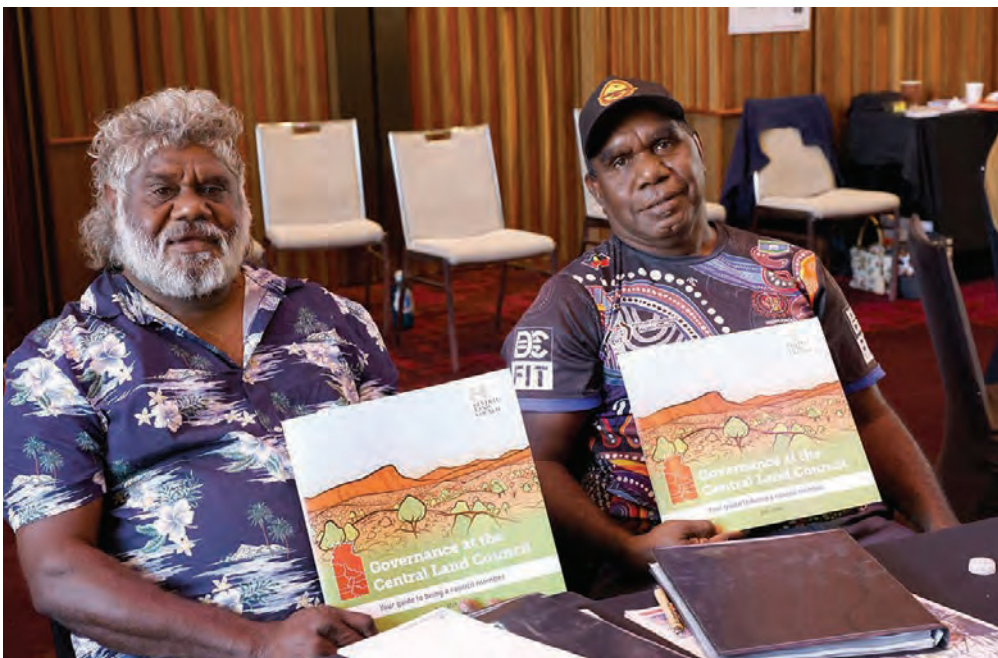
The cake was a big hit with the kids at the Wakaya Alyawarre handback.



Lawrence and Michael Watson looked for skinks at Lungkardajarra.



Lorraine Granites, Margaret Lewis, Enid Gallagher, Alice Henwood and Nancy Collins led the tracking during Mulyamiji March.



Patrick Collins and Justin Corby brushed up on their governance training at the April council meeting.



Michael Wheeler (left) and Ashely got ready to perform inma at Ilpili.



Ezekiah, from Watiyawanu, enjoyed a cool snack before dancing at the Central Western Desert IPA event.



Warren Williams, Farron Gorey and Les Turner braved the rain at the ranger camp at Ross River.



Tanisha Vincent helped her colleagues with the CLC election meeting in Engalwala.



Director of the Tyatyekwenhe Aboriginal Corporation, Jill Doolan joined in the conversation at the PBC camp.



The Anangu Luritjiku ranger team travelled from Papunya to the ranger camp.

EVERY HILL GOT A STORY
is now back in print

We used to learn every day



Barbara Napanangka Martin

We had to go to school, it was really strict. And there was parole officers going around picking us up, and talking to our parents, 'Your child needs to go to school'. We used to learn every day. The only time we were away from school was when our parents came and got us. This was every Friday, not the middle of the week. Friday afternoon we used to go camping out with our family.

I went to early childhood first, and then primary, and when I got a bit older, my parents decided to send me to Yirara College, in 1975, 1976 and 1977. And I also went to ASHS [Alice Springs High School] while I was there. We enjoyed staying at boarding school and going to school there. It was really good.

The uniforms that we wore, we loved it, and we used to go swimming, we used to go driving near

Yirara College. And we used to go camping out a lot. But we used to learn to read and write too. It was really good for us to learn. [The focus on] education came from our parents.

I learnt culture side from my uncle, Peter Dixon. We were like in a group travelling around with uncle, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, and I also learnt from my stepfather. In the extended family, that's the culture way, but in English way I have learned in a school, where it was only English taught there.

I sort of broke up with my first husband and went and lived in Lajamanu, and I went to the literacy centre and asked to work there as a literacy worker. So I started doing translating and transcribing and recording. At the same time I started doing linguist training, learning about reading and writing in our language. First I went to Darwin and did a SIL [Summer Institute of Linguistics] course, South Australian course, to learn to do transcribing and translating.

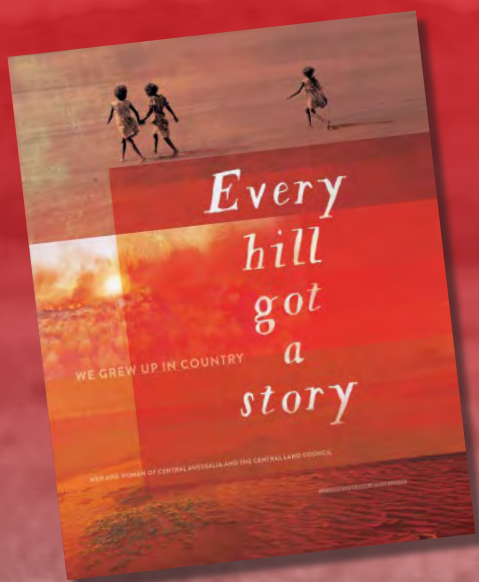
I remember coming back to Yuendumu, 1985. I was really happy when I started working as a literacy worker at Yuendumu BRDU [Bilingual Resource Development Unit], doing the same thing that

I did at Lajamanu. So then I decided to become a teacher and went and asked the principal, 'I want to work as an AT, assistant teacher.' And I worked with this young teacher, helping her in her classroom, to calm the kids down, talk to them. I also did a little bit of teaching with her. Those kids need Warlpiri teacher to be there, and they need good Warlpiri to be spoken, and to learn, and to settle them down, like discipline. Kardiya [non-Aboriginal] teacher – yes, they got experience, they professional – but then sometimes kids can be really silly. They need to have Yapa [Aboriginal] teacher there to speak to them in Warlpiri – 'This is what she said, you need to listen.'

Barbara Napanangka Martin

Excerpt from *Every hill got a story*

For more information go to clc.org.au/every-hill-got-a-story



MEET OUR RANGERS



Shannon Palmer

What made you want to be a ranger?

I wanted to be a ranger to look after the country and learn more from the elders. To know more about my culture, the tjukurpa for my country and listening to the elders when they are talking about the tjukurpa on the country that we work on.

What is the best thing about being a ranger?

Discovering new things while working as a ranger that you wouldn't know, for example that there are natural springs in the desert. Also working alongside scientists to look after our endangered animals and plants.

What do you do as a ranger?

We do all sorts of things from ground burning, aerial incendiary burns, maintaining water holes and natural springs, also baiting feral cats with 1080 [poison]. To do all the fun and cool things that come with working as a ranger you have to do a lot of training, but it's so worth it.

What are some of the hard things?

Being away from family and trying to work with little to no help. It does take a toll on our bodies, the work that we do.

What do you do outside of work?

I spend most of my time with my family. When I'm not with them I'm at the outstation, gardening and reading my collection of books. I like to listen to music while I do some art.

What languages do you speak?

English, and understand Warlpiri and Arrernte.

