

Community Development NEWS



20 Year ANNIVERSARY EDITION



CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL

**ABORIGINAL VOICES
ABORIGINAL CHOICES**

CLC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PUTS
COMMUNITY IN THE DRIVING SEAT SINCE 2005

CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF UNLEASHING THE POWER OF SELF-DETERMINATION



them on better ways to use the rent income from the park. The Uluru rent money program was born.

Over the years the CLC established a dedicated community development unit that today employs more than 30 staff working with over 100 working groups across its region. The unit has supported 3,000 projects and helped groups invest \$300 million in their communities.

The team has introduced new ways of working with Central Australian Aboriginal communities that people now recognise in the rest of Australia and overseas. At its core, the approach is about Aboriginal people being in the driving seat and shifting power about what happens in their communities.

“THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS HELPING MAKE PEOPLE STRONGER. IT MAKES US HAPPY TO BE DOING MORE PROJECTS. WE ARE IN CONTROL OF THE PROCESS,” SAID THE LATE ULURU RENT MONEY GROUP MEMBER MS CLYNE.

Good governance is important, which means doing things the right way in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds. In the CLC’s ‘bottom-up’ approach to development the vision and plans come from community and are not handed down by governments.

Papunya working group member Lynda Lechleitner said the program “tries to give people a voice and helps them understand how they can spend their money to make their community better.”



In 2001, a group of Warlpiri women met with former Central Land Council director David Ross in Lajamanu. They had a big vision for their children, education and the future of their communities.

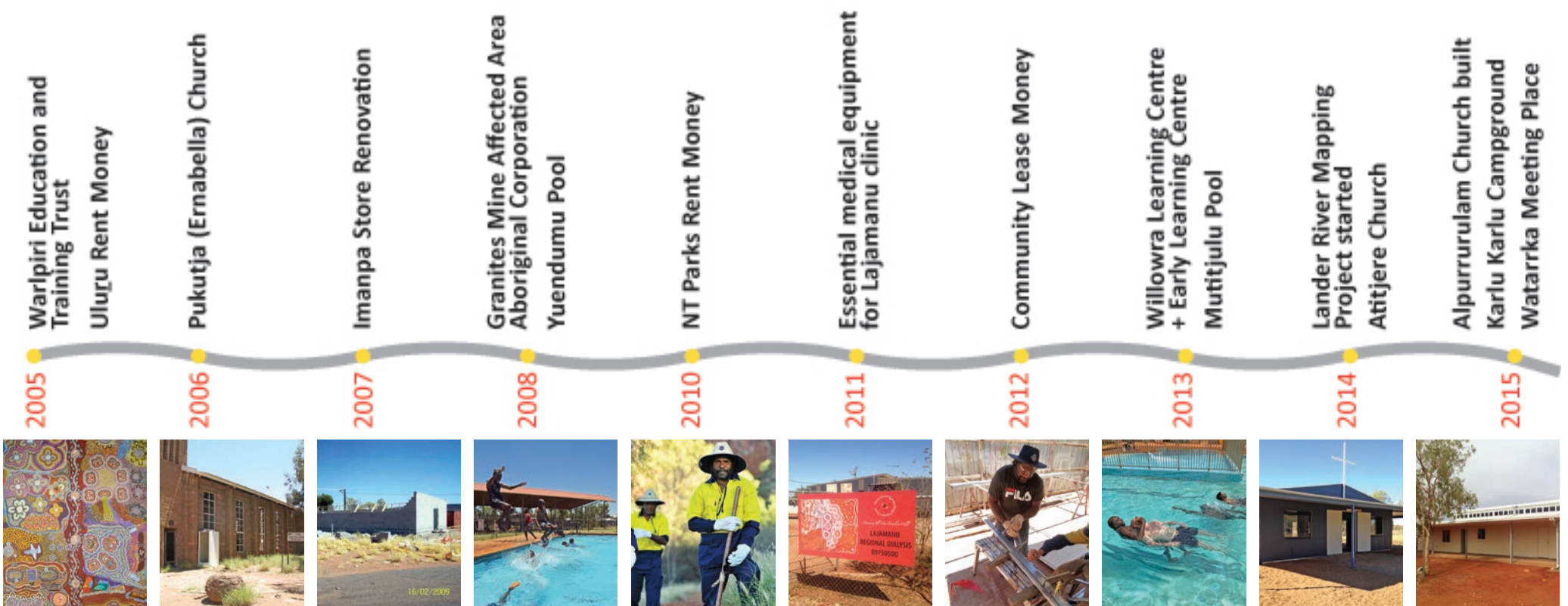
Strong in their culture and experts in education, the women knew that two-way education was needed for their children to have a good future and walk strong in both worlds.

Their decision to seek additional mining royalties to fund lifelong learning was a big

step forward in Aboriginal-led development. It led the CLC to set up the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust in 2005, and with it came a groundbreaking way of working that invests Yapa funds in education programs for Yapa, designed by Yapa.

“Education is the key and to keep our culture, language and our Jukurrpa strong,” said Verona Nungarrayi Jurrah, a member of the trust’s advisory committee.

The WETT showed how local Aboriginal voices make communities stronger by focusing on what people need and want. In 2006, the Anangu traditional owners of the Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park asked the CLC to work with



“Our voice is getting stronger. We have more knowledge to have the conversations with kardiya. It’s not all one way now,” said Kurra director Roger Japaljarri Jurrah.

Communities – not governments – lead project decisions because they are using their own money. People consider information, choose projects and plan and make decisions together. It’s about having the skills to take control and shape every project, with support from the CLC and outside experts.

The program’s success shows that Aboriginal people know what their communities need. Despite the shadow of the 2007 Northern Territory Intervention – a huge blow to Aboriginal power and control – they have shown their capacity to work for their children’s future.



The YWPP community researchers make sure WETT programs are strong for community



Bush trip near Kaltukatjara

Today, the work goes beyond buildings and programs. Communities now develop masterplans that set out how they want to live on their land. They talk up strong to governments and show people around the world what self-determination looks like.

“YOU SIT DOWN WITH YOUR MOUTH CLOSED AT THE TABLE, YOU WON’T GET NOWHERE. YOU GOTTA SPEAK UP FOR YOUR COMMUNITY,” SAID IMANPA WORKING GROUP MEMBER KATHLEEN LUCKEY.

Good governance makes for strong projects and creates change. A dedicated governance support program, developed in 2018, helps the boards of the Granites Mine Affected Area and Kurra Aboriginal corporations in the Tanami manage mining money and plan for the long term.

This training has helped Mr Jurrah learn how to manage money. “Money for Yapa is like the wind, it comes and it goes. This training has taught me all the things you can do with money, you can save it and grow it.”

Some communities and groups get much less income from land use agreements than the GMAAAC and Kurra. That makes it hard to dream big and make positive changes. To support those communities, the CLC worked with the federal government to start a ‘matched funds’ program. For every dollar a community invests, up to a limit of \$150,000, the government matches it. This helps communities with less money take on bigger and longer projects. From eight projects in 2020 the initiative now supports more than 260.

Over time, many Aboriginal people gained jobs through community-led projects and built solid careers. The WETT’s all-Aboriginal community research team is a great example.

The trained and skilled researchers collect stories from their neighbours and families and listen to community voices. They share this feedback about the WETT programs with the trust’s advisory committee, community residents and traditional owners.



The Making Yuendumu Beautiful Project team celebrate together at the murals community launch

They have spread their knowledge at conferences across the country and overseas and have worked for other Northern Territory Aboriginal organisations. When Aboriginal people lead, communities thrive. The CLC’s community development approach proves that deep listening, two-way learning and local people making decisions create lasting change. This is self-determination in action — strong communities shaping their own futures.



Ntaria football oval lights let residents enjoy games at night

- 2016**: Kaltukatjara Music Studio
- 2017**: Phillipson’s Bore Campground and Outstation Works
- 2018**: Warlpiri Education and Training Trust and Alekarengge win Indigenous Governance Award
- 2019**: Good Governance Program with Kurra & GMAAAC, Ntaria Football Clubrooms
- 2020**: Matched funds trial starts, Ltyentye Apurte Skatepark, Ntaria Football Club and oval
- 2021**: Yeperenye Trail
- 2022**: Lajamanu Water Park
- 2023**: Yuelamu masterplan completed, Mutitjulu shaded walkway project
- 2024**: Warlpiri Education and Training Trust wins National NAIDOC Education Award, Imangara Church
- 2025**: GMAAAC Finalist Indigenous Governance Awards, Ntaria Historic Cemetery, Ntaria Sandhill Basketball Shade

EDUCATION THAT SPEAKS OUR LANGUAGE



Amata resident Gina Williamson told stories in sand at Walikutju

Young Aboriginal people thrive when learning is grounded in culture – a principle the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust has put into practice for 20 years.

Through learning on country, in Warlpiri and with their elders, the trust supports children to use traditional knowledge and understand mainstream ideas, helping them to live confidently in two worlds.

Since 2005, the Central Land Council has supported Aboriginal groups across its region to invest more than \$100 million in education and youth projects. These investments strengthen families, embed language and culture in schools and create strong life pathways for young people.

It supports students to attend boarding schools while adult learning centres provide new education pathways for residents of Lajamanu, Nyirrpri and Willowra. Early childhood initiatives, such as the Willowra playgroup, build strong foundations and create safe, welcoming spaces for families.



Lajamanu community reading night

“Playgroup provides consistency for the kids and learning together,” said WETT advisory committee member Julie Napaljarri Kitson.

Learning on country remains central. Both the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation (GMAAAC) and the WETT support students to learn out bush.



NPY boarding school program

Former Yuendumu school assistant principal and WETT advisory committee member Yamurna Oldfield said these experiences are essential. “There were lots of opportunities for kids to see their country, their own place. They are happy when a country visit is happening,” she said. “Kids get to know their own dreaming.”

The GMAAAC funds bilingual staff to develop Warlpiri language resources at the Yuendumu school, drawing on the trust’s Warlpiri curriculum.



WETT advisory committee members Maisie Napaljarri Kitson and Sharon Nampijinpa Anderson accept the 2025 NAIDOC award for education

“WHEN I SEE KIDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE SITTING DOWN, THEY LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY. IT HELPS THEM TO BE STRONG.” WETT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER ENID NANGALA GALLAGHER SAID.

Across the desert, Aboriginal groups are investing in education in and beyond the classroom. The Uluru rent money group funds teaching resources in Pitjantjatjara and English and the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women’s Council’s boarding school program. The group has paid for a classroom at Wanmarra, a homeland in the Watarrka National Park, so kids can learn at home. Similarly, the group for Lilla has built its own classroom for education on country.



A young rider at Ltyentye Apurte Skatepark

Youth programs also focus on wellbeing, funding skateparks, sports ovals, pools and after-school activities in communities such as Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa), Ntaria, Mutitjulu, Watiyawanu (Mount Liebig) and Alekarenge.

“IT KEEPS EVERYONE OCCUPIED. YOUNG PEOPLE AND OLDER PEOPLE HAVE THINGS TO DO AND ENJOY A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.” SAID LTYENTYE APURTE RESIDENT ANNALISA YOUNG.



Denicia and James showed off their Easter hats in WETT’s Willowra playgroup



Young players had a ball on the Ltyentye Apurte basketball court

Cultural and school excursions see students from communities including Walungurru (Kintore), Lajamanu, Ntaria and Titjikala heading out to the bush, the cities and the coast to expand their two-way learning and exposure to opportunities beyond their own communities.

The Wanta Aboriginal Corporation runs year-round youth activities in Yuendumu and Lajamanu with GMAAAC funds. The WETT pays for the bush trips of the Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service, and the GMAAAC also partners with the Australian Football League of the Northern Territory to help more girls in Lajamanu take up the game.

These programs take young people out on country, into leadership roles and beyond their communities, building strong identity and confidence and providing new opportunities for learning.

Nyirрпи resident Michaeline Napaljarri Gallagher is one of many shaped by this work. After growing up with these programs, she now holds leadership roles with the WETT and the GMAAAC. Her story shows the power of Warlpiri educators' vision.



Thumbs up to the colour run at the Muṯitjulu pool

YOUNG LEADER DRAWS HOPE AND MEANING FROM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Michaeline Gallagher is a strong young leader and advocate for education

Nyirрпи leader Michaeline Napaljarri Gallagher brings a big-picture vision to her country, juggling roles across five committees to help her community thrive through culture and connection.

The 32-year-old mother of three serves on the boards of the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust and the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation. She spends six weeks each year in Alice Springs at meetings that shape Nyirрпи's future. That's in part because she also sits on the Central Desert Regional Council, attending council meetings in Alice Springs and local authority meetings in Nyirрпи.

At home, Ms Gallagher teaches at Nyirрпи's school and serves on its committee. She also works at the local shop and is a member of its committee.

“I THINK ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND THE PEOPLE AND WHAT TO DO NEXT FOR THEM. IT'S GOT A SENSE OF HOPE AND MEANING FOR ME.” MS GALLAGHER SAID.

Ms Gallagher grew up immersed in WETT-funded education programs. Her mother, Enid Nangala Gallagher, is a member of the trust. Michaeline credits its school and after-school activities – computers, painting, storytelling and trips out bush – with helping her thrive.

She boarded at the Yirara College in Alice Springs before continuing her education at the Worawa Aboriginal College near Melbourne. After Year 10, she returned to Yuendumu and later moved to Nyirрпи.

The community shop was her introduction to local committees. Seeing how shared decision-making improved outcomes, she decided to join more committees. For Ms Gallagher, working across different committees gives her different points of view on a problem and allows her to get support from other sources.

The Central Land Council's community development program helped her to bring a health expert to the community to talk about the impact of sugary drinks. The shop now has a 'no-sugar drink day' once a week.

Despite her demanding schedule, Ms Gallagher attends national conferences to explain the impact of the WETT's education work and, late last year, participated in the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education in Auckland, Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Ms Gallagher helped drive the GMAAAC's largest infrastructure investment in Nyirрпи – the \$4.2 million redevelopment of the recreation hall and learning centre. A strategic thinker, she has embraced community master planning and supports the board's vision for a new car park, playground and a memorial park.

The memorial park means a lot to her. It will honour and share the stories of the elders who walked 163 kilometres from Yuendumu back to their homelands near Nyirрпи, “making a road with their bare hands” and later set up the community.

“It makes you feel really good that people see it and learn about it and pass it on to their children,” she said.



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The GMAAAC Board learn about governance and long-term financial planning at the Good Governance Program workshops

LEARNING THE MONEY STORY: HOW ABORIGINAL BOARDS ARE SHAPING THEIR OWN FUTURES

When the boards of the Kurra and Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal corporations meet three times a year, directors prepare for four days to tackle complex governance and financial issues before their formal board meetings.

This gives directors the time and space to explore options and build understanding to make clear, confident decisions.

Since 2018, the Good Governance Program has prepared directors to make long-term financial decisions, so their corporations are sustainable when their main income source, the Granites gold mine, ends.



Peter Corbett showed Mick Dodson the work they've undertaken at the Alekarenge footy oval

“BEFORE THE GOOD GOVERNANCE PROGRAM, WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WE WERE THERE FOR AS A DIRECTOR. IT'S ALL COMING TOGETHER NOW. WE UNDERSTAND,” KURRA DIRECTOR ROBYN LAWSON SAID.

“It's all about the money. We didn't understand about the money. We thought it was all one thing. We know now that the [investments] we can't touch it, it's for the future. It's a long journey to really understand. I am still learning.”

The Good Governance Program is a powerful example of how the right governance support strengthens Aboriginal-led decision-making.



Judith Martin, Marjorie Brown, Jean Brown in the Good Governance Program workshop

Kurra and WETT Advisory Committee presents at the AIATSIS Summit in 2025



“I LEARNED A LOT ABOUT THE MONEY STORY. IT WAS HARD FOR ME AT FIRST. BUT NOW, WHEN I KEEP COMING BACK AND HAVING THIS TRAINING, IT IS REALLY OPENING MY EYES TO USING MONEY WISELY,” GMAAAC DIRECTOR JEAN BROWN SAID.

Papunya group work on a masterplan



The Central Land Council works with more than 100 groups, from the Tanami to the Plenty highways, to Western Australia and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands. Strong governance helps groups navigate both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds, manage their money and invest in projects that are good for their communities. It also supports groups to set goals, run meetings, make decisions, follow rules and work well together.

In Papunya, Yuelamu, Nyirрпи, Wirrimanu (Balgo), Muṯitjulu, Warlungurru (Kintore) and Burt groups make master plans for their communities. They build a big vision for what they want their community to look like. They then set priorities, coordinate stakeholders and services, and create solutions that fit local culture and needs.

CDOs Alice Coates and Mary Grimwade with GMAAAC members Kylie McDonald, Clare Gordon, Javin Sturt at the PULiiMA Indigenous Language and Culture Conference in August 2025, Darwin



Directors often face unfamiliar ideas while working in a second language.

Kurra director Roger Jurrah recalled the early challenges. “At first, I thought what is percentage and how is it divided, and what does it really mean, all this kardiya stuff? In our culture we don’t think about those things. But that’s what I’ve learned along the way and it’s really good.”

The strong governance of groups such as the Alekarenge working group, the Warlpiri Education Training Trust and the GMAAAC has gained national recognition through the Indigenous Governance Awards.

GMAAAC director Cyril Tasman said attending the awards was uplifting. “It was inspiring to see Indigenous elders leading and to learn about the great things other organisations are doing for their people.”



Laramba working group with CDO Paige Le Cornu

The groups have shared their governance experience at conferences and events across Australia and overseas.

“WE DID A BIG PRESENTATION ABOUT HOW WE USE OUR OWN WARLPIRI MONEY. THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTED. THERE WERE SO MANY QUESTIONS. IT’S GOOD WE HAVE TO TALK UP STRONG,” WETT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER FIONA NAPALJARRI GIBSON SAID.



The Imanpa Working Group

Good Governance Program trainers adapted their approach to match how Yapa wanted to learn. A full-time evaluator attended sessions to support two-way learning, hearing real-time feedback and suggestions. Directors also led cultural sessions for trainers, creating a level playing field.

“In the first three years, we focused on creating bilingual resources and developing visuals and language that made sense to the directors,” program coordinator Karina Menkhorst said.

In 2025, the GMAAAC and Kurra corporations published their first strategic plans, creating a strong legacy and a clear vision for future leaders. Their greatest strength, however, lies with the people. Since the program began, 39 GMAAAC directors and 28 Kurra directors have the tools to walk confidently in both Yapa and kardiya worlds.



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Performers get ready at Alekareng festival

WHEN CULTURE IS STRONG, OUR PEOPLE ARE STRONG

As Aben Sandy rhythmically stamps his feet on the dusty earth, his mind and painted-up body connect to tens of thousands of years-old stories being passed down to him by his ancestors.

“A happiness given from the past” is how Mr Sandy describes the dance that makes his spirit strong on country. Through the sound of clapping sticks, he connects with his grandparents who passed away many years ago. “It’s like they are beside me.”

For the 24-year-old from Papunya, it is a learning experience that deepens as connection is made across the generations.

“YOU HAVE SOME ELDERS FROM THE PAST AROUND YOU, SUPPORTING YOU, TELLING YOU, THAT WE ARE STILL AROUND. IT’S YOUR TURN TO DO THIS AND TAKE IT ON” MR SANDY SAID.



Women from Atitjere and Mt Eaglebeak collect bush medicine



Ceremony during the Warlpiri Project

Language and culture shape the identity and wellbeing of Central Australian Aboriginal people.

Investing in culture is about more than the past. It is about future generations walking strong in two worlds and looking after culture and identity while undertaking education and paid work.

Dance camps and cultural festivals become living classrooms, where knowledge passes between elders and young ones. Events like Memory Mountain at Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff), Milpirri in Lajamanu and the Alekarenge cultural festival bring together families and communities to celebrate song, dance and story.

Cultural archiving, mapping and repatriation projects make sure Aboriginal stories are protected and in Aboriginal hands. These projects help communities to see, hear and control cultural materials.

The programs include the interactive Pitjantjatjara social history archive Ara Irititja, the Willowra cultural mapping project, and the Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri Media's archiving work in Yuendumu (the latter two funded by the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation).

“WE OFTEN FIND, IN BOOKS, THAT THEY ARE WRITTEN BY WHITE PEOPLE, FOR WHITE PEOPLE. BUT WE ANANGU SHOULD BE ENSURING OUR OWN HISTORIES ARE WRITTEN UP IN BOOKS, FOR EVERYONE ALL AROUND THE WORLD, TO READ AND LEARN.” SAID ULURU RENT MONEY WORKING GROUP MEMBER TJULAPI ALISON CARROLL.



The Warlpiri Project is funded by the Yuendumu GMAAAC committee since 2022. It supports senior men and women to track down important cultural and historical items that have been collected by institutions and individuals worldwide, and return them to keeping places in their communities.

In Ringer Soak, the GMAAAC has funded research to display Jukurrpa and other local history on Jaru language signs in the community.

Art centres have also become vital cultural and economic hubs. In Yuelamu and Engawala, new art centres have created spaces where elders and young artists meet through painting and storytelling, sharing culture and knowledge and supplementing their incomes.



Men's and women's cultural camps help to strengthen identity and wellbeing. At the Kintore men's project, the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara men's cultural trips, the Southern Ngaliya girls dance camps and the Wirrimanu (Balgo) ngurra kutjuwarra culture camps people get to spend time on country and learn language, law and culture.

“THIS WAS ONE OF THE BEST DAYS I HAVE SEEN IN KINTORE. THE PEOPLE WERE ON A HIGH AND EVERYONE WAS HAPPY AND PROUD.” SAID JAMIE TJUPURRULA MILLIER, REFLECTING ON A MEN'S CAMP.

Elders say these programs are very important as they take young people away from screens and keep them out of trouble.

“These days all our kids know is Facebook, Instagram, TikTok,” said Atitjere Land Aboriginal Corporation director Maria Ross. “We want to teach them about bush medicine and being on country. When us old people are gone, we need the young generation to keep the culture strong and pass it on.”



A SPACE BUILT BY THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY

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The working group was proud of building the Imangara church

On a hot day in Imangara, elders unlock the doors of the local church. The building is simple, but its meaning is clear. It is fully owned, funded and controlled by Aboriginal people.

“The church is really good. Everyone agreed with it. It is important for the community,” said Imangara working group member Jacintha Morrison. “The old people and grandmothers always wanted the church they were fighting for, and now it’s happened for us.”

Across Central Australia, Aboriginal groups are building shared spaces owned by the community. These spaces are vital in the bush. They provide places to practice culture, hold ceremonies, teach young people, stay healthy and connect.

In Mutitjulu, the Uluru rent money working group used its income to build a swimming pool. Opened in 2013 it has provided employment to up to three local Aboriginal people each year. The ‘yes pool, yes school’ policy has improved school attendance, and regular swimming has also reduced skin infections.

The group and the Central Land Council built the pool over seven years. They learned about complex planning rules and talked a lot with traditional owners to make sure everything was done the right way. Dorethea Randall, a working group member from the start, said approvals were complex because Mutitjulu sits inside the Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park.

“YOU HAD TO DO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATION, ENSURE THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS WERE FULLY CONSULTED ON WHERE THE POOL WOULD BE BUILT. THERE WERE A LOT OF PROCESSES IN PLACE, AND IT WAS IMPORTANT TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CLC LAWYERS,” MS RANDALL SAID.



Santa Teresa basketball court being built

Papunya picnic area with Linda Allen and Punata Stockman



“WE ARE SO LUCKY BECAUSE IT COMES FROM YAPA MONEY. WE PUT IN A LOT OF INVESTMENTS FOR THIS. WE DID THIS FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND FOR THE KURDU KURDU (CHILDREN),” SAID GMAAAC DIRECTOR AND NYIRRPI COMMITTEE MEMBER FIONA NAPALJARRI GIBSON.

After two decades Aboriginal voices are stronger than ever, shaping master plans and guiding where new facilities should go. The diverse community infrastructure across the CLC region shows that when Aboriginal communities lead, results are more practical, longer-lasting and a better fit with culture and people’s lives.

Since then, Aboriginal-led projects have grown. Young people now have the Tara playground, Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa) skatepark, Papunya sports grounds and Lajamanu water park. Communities can be creative and share culture in the Yuelamu recording studio, Utju art centre and Laramba ceremony shelter.

In Nyirrpri, the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation committee has worked with the CLC for 10 years to improve community spaces, leading to the \$4.2 million upgrade of the learning centre and recreation hall. This work took huge effort, patience, careful planning and listening to what the community wanted.

For the community to come together in safe and inviting spaces, there are the Papunya picnic area, Watarrka meeting place, Karlu Karlu meeting shelter and Yuendumu murals. Residents can practice their beliefs and honour loved ones with upgrades to cemeteries

With this knowledge community development working groups in Yuelamu, Papunya and Wirrimanu (Balgo) are now creating master plans that link buildings and services so communities function better.

Kids enjoyed a splash at Lajamanu water park



CLC community development manager Ian Sweeney said this makes a big difference. “The health department builds a clinic, and education builds a school, and someone builds a shop, but no one asks how do we walk from the clinic to the shop and where does the community gather? How do you connect them and where do we need shade? It’s really focusing everybody on the liveability of communities rather than just the functionality of services.”



Kids enjoyed the slide at Tara play ground

in Ntaria and Ringer Soak, and new and renovated churches in Watiyawanu (Mount Liebig), Nyirrpri, Atitjere, Titjikala, Alpurrurulam and Imanpa.

Based on what residents say is important, the CLC helps groups develop long-term plans for their communities and then make projects happen. This involves working through complex rules, building partnerships and talking up strong to government.



The Nyirrpri GMAAAC committee developed a master plan with a long term vision for their community

Utju community are proud of their church



WHERE COUNTRY MEETS COMMUNITY

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Henry Oliver enjoyed his new kitchen at Williams Well

Henry Oliver says he would be lost without his homeland, Williams Well.

“IT MAKES ME FEEL I BELONG. IT’S GOT MY CULTURE, CEREMONIES – EVERYTHING ON THE HOMELAND IS PART OF ME,” HENRY SAID.

Mr Oliver grew up in the 1990s watching his father fight for the land and he now deeply values that hard won connection. Without country, he believes his life could have taken a very different path.

“I could have ended up in prison or in a coffin,” he said.

A major flood in 2013 badly damaged properties on the homeland and forced families to move to Amoonguna. Unable to repair the damage, residents lost homelands funding. The following year, working with the Central Land Council, the families used national park rent income to restore the water supply and began a series of upgrades that saw the homeland return to the Northern Territory government funding list.

Tanami Downs Solar Array



In recent years, Mr Oliver and his family have worked closely with the CLC to improve daily life for residents. They upgraded kitchens and bathrooms and added verandas. They built a new ablution block and installed a solar-powered bore pump, communal shade structures and a mobile hotspot.



The Tanami Downs GMAAAC committee and families celebrated housing upgrades with CLC Community Development staff

Across the region, the CLC has spent tens of millions of dollars on homelands projects and set up governance groups to manage complex works. Its long-term, steady approach helps communities build strong, liveable outstations over time.

“HOMELANDS KEEP US STRONG. THEY KEEP US WHO WE ARE.”

MR OLIVER SAID.



Mark Alice in front of his new house in Urremerne outstation

Homelands remain a clear priority. The Davenport Ranges group directs all its rent income back into homelands, while communities in the southwest have delivered projects at Palm Paddock, Lilla, Alkarrintja, Desert Bore and many more. Despite high costs, limited service providers and the challenges of remote work, communities continue to lead and push projects forward.

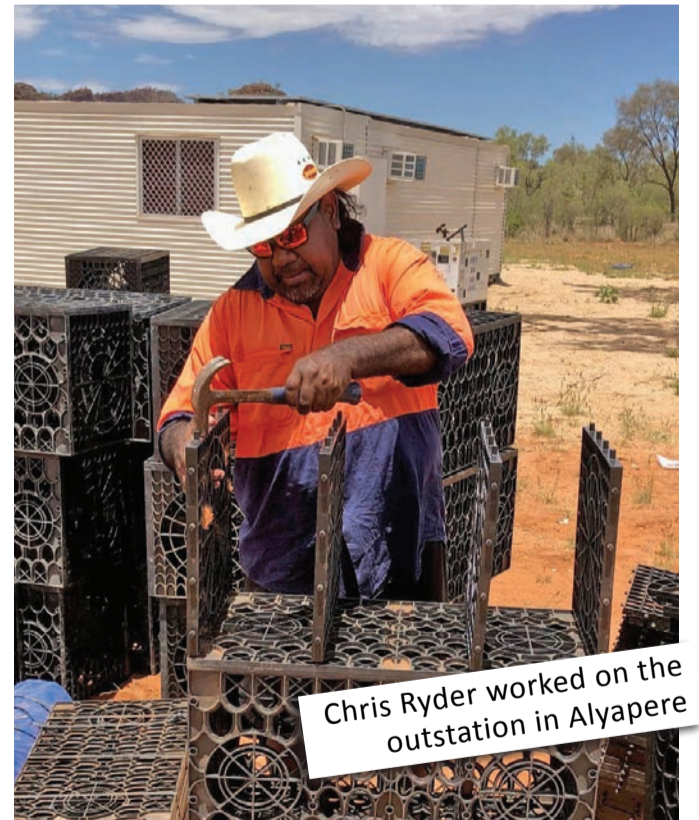


Sadie Williams at her Lilla homeland house

At Tanami Downs, increased income from the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation turned a longheld vision into reality. Over time, families have built new homes, secured reliable electricity and solar power. They upgraded water and plumbing, established gardens and orchards, improved landscaping, managed weeds and graded roads. Residents say the gradual growth has made daily life for their families better.

“The land heals us,” resident and GMAAAC committee member Robyn Lawson said.

Alyarpere residents in the East MacDonnell Ranges tell a similar story. The Ryder family developed their homeland through careful planning, family members controlled erosion, built fences and houses with toilets, solar power, an ablutions block and new water tanks.



Chris Ryder worked on the outstation in Alyapere

“IT’S BETTER TO START SMALL AND GROW TO GET BIGGER. I LEARNT AS I WENT, SO NOW I CAN DO IT MYSELF.” CHRIS RYDER SAID.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INCOME STREAMS

MATCHED FUNDS

The Central Land Council and the National Indigenous Australians Agency started a trial in 2020 to fund groups that use new income from land use agreements for community driven projects by matching their investments dollar-for-dollar.

All communities with new lease income and traditional owner groups with new income from land use agreements between \$50,000 and \$150,000 are eligible.

A significant amount of the matched funds has gone to groups whose incomes from land use agreements would otherwise be too small for the projects they want. The trial was extended for another three years in 2023.

Twenty-three traditional owner groups and 27 communities currently take part in the trial.

The groups have planned and funded 250 projects with almost \$9 million dollars of their matched funds.

Some larger projects have attracted co-funding from other sources with support from CLC's community development team.

GRANITES MINE AFFECTED AREA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

The Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation benefits nine communities affected by Newmont's Granites gold mine in the Tanami Desert - Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Willowra, Nyirrpi, Yuelamu, Tanami Downs, Balgo, Ringer Soak and Billiluna.

Every year, community committees plan, and allocate funds to, community benefit projects.

Communities elect committee members every three years and the committees choose the directors of the corporation.

The CLC's community development unit helps the community committees to plan the projects and select partner organisations to implement them.

Since 2008 GMAAAC has allocated more than \$130 million to 1,400 community benefit projects. The projects create jobs for Yapa, contracts for local businesses and support community priorities such as language, culture, education, training, essential services and infrastructure.

The GMAAAC, the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust, and the Newmont Tanami Operations support the CLC's community development work in the Tanami.

Some projects in the region have also been supported with funds from the Tanami Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation.

NORTHERN TERRITORY PARKS RENT MONEY

In 2010 the traditional owners of 16 national parks and reserves across the CLC region leased their land to the NT government.

They use all the rent they get for these jointly managed parks for community benefit projects and the CLC is helping them to prioritise and plan community benefit projects, mostly on their outstations.

The working groups they set up have so far allocated more than \$18 million to 385 projects. Groups have been able to access co-funding from other sources for some projects with support from CLC's community development team.

ULURU-KATA TJUTA NATIONAL PARK RENT MONEY

Every year since 2005 the traditional owners of the national park have spent a big part of their share of the rent and gate money they get from the Commonwealth on projects in their communities in the Northern Territory and South Australia.

They meet three times a year to decide how to spend that income, and plan and monitor projects. Among the local and regional projects are upgrades and repairs of sports grounds and outstations, and support for renal dialysis, local and boarding school education.

They have set up funeral funds and strengthen local culture through intergenerational knowledge transfer activities.

The Muṯitjulu community receives its own share of income from the park. It has funded the construction and operation of its swimming pool and upgrades of its recreation hall and other sporting facilities.

The community has also funded men's ceremonies and cultural trips, an upgrade of the community's inma (ceremony) ground and a boarding school support program across the region.

So far, the traditional owners have allocated almost \$25 million to 153 projects.

COMMUNITY LEASE MONEY

The project started in 2012, after two new income streams started to flow. The first was the Commonwealth's one-off compensation payment for the compulsory leases it took out over 31 communities during the five years of the NT Emergency Response "Intervention".

This money is now spent in most communities. The second is lease money governments and other organisations and service providers pay annually for the blocks they lease in communities.

All communities have working groups to plan and monitor projects - a total of 400 so far. Since 2012, communities have invested \$22 million into projects. Groups have been able to access co-funding from other sources for some projects with support from CLC's community development team.

WARLPIRI EDUCATION AND TRAINING TRUST

The Warlpiri Education and Training Trust has supported education and training in Nyirrpi, Lajamanu, Willowra and Yuendumu since 2005.

The trust receives more than \$6 million every year from Newmont's Granites gold mine for its children and families, language and culture in schools, youth development, learning community centres and secondary school support programs.

The Kurra Aboriginal Corporation meets twice a year to decide how to spend this income and its WETT advisory committee meets three times a year to plan and monitor the five major WETT programs.

The trust delivers the programs in partnership with community schools, the Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education and World Vision Australia.

It has invested more than \$75 million so far.

COMMUNITY BUILDS WORK THAT MATTERS

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Sacara and Nelina rested when they worked on the Yeperenye trail

When the traditional owners of the Yeperenye Nature Park invested their entire \$363,000 in park rent in a new walking and cycling track between Emily and Jessie Gap they did more than build infrastructure. They created jobs, skills and pride on country.

Over six months, the community-led project delivered culturally grounded training and employment in remote communities, where opportunities are often limited. With support from the Central Land Council, senior people mentored more than 30 Aboriginal men and women to build the 7.2-kilometre Yeperenye trail by hand, using basic tools.

Amoonguna elder and cultural supervisor Clement Alice said guiding younger workers brought deep pride.

“IT’S GIVEN US EMPLOYMENT AND IT’S A HEALTHY ACTIVITY. IT’S GOOD TO BE OUT ON COUNTRY, WORKING TOGETHER.”

MR ALICE SAID.

The CLC and trail construction company Tricky Tracks helped workers gain white cards and provided transport, meals and flexible work arrangements. Fortnightly Facebook posts allowed people to choose shifts, helping them balance work with family and cultural

responsibilities. Cultural supervisors adjusted the track’s route to protect sacred sites.

By working closely with Aboriginal leaders from the start, the project delivered local jobs that communities valued and controlled. The trail shows decision-making in Aboriginal hands and employment tied directly to culture and country works.

That approach underpins the CLC’s community development work across the region. Aboriginal groups have created hundreds of jobs, from construction to education and cultural work.

In the Tanami, Warlpiri Education Training Trust-funded learning centres provide ongoing adult education employment for community facilitators, trainee coordinators and educators. Early childhood initiatives, including



Osmon Peters and Nat Watson worked on the Nyirripi Rec Hall



Local workers built the Imangara church



David Cooley, Clem Taylor and Christopher Dixon practised CPR as lifeguards at Mutitjulu pool



Louanna Williams and Madeleine Dixon keep Yuendumu safe with the Community Patrols

the Unlock Literacy program delivered with aid agency World Vision, employ local cultural advisors and facilitators.

In Yuendumu, the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation's Learning in Country program employs Yapa educators, elders and mentors, while the Southern Ngaliya dance camps create work for cultural custodians and mentors. Pintupi Anmatjere Warlpiri Media also uses the corporation's income to employ Yapa.

Further south, the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council's boarding school project uses Uluru rent income to hire Anangu mentors to support Anangu students through secondary education far from home.



Luke Wallace worked on a shelter in Laramba

"IT'S GOOD TO HAVE SUPPORTIVE MENTORS GUIDING YOUNG PEOPLE. IT HELPS THEM UNDERSTAND THEIR IDENTITY, WHERE THEY COME FROM, AND WHAT THEY CAN ACHIEVE."

ANANGU MENTOR TAMEKA MCMASTERS SAID.

Recreation projects also create jobs while strengthening communities. The GMAAAC-funded Lajamanu waterpark and a youth sports and recreation project in Ringer Soak employs local workers, while Aboriginal lifeguards are working at the swimming pools in Yuendumu and Muṯitjulu.

"I'M PROUD TO WORK HERE. I'VE LEARNED HOW TO TEST THE POOL AND KEEP THE KIDS SAFE." YUENDUMU LIFEGUARD SHAQUILLE PRESLEY SAID.

In Yuendumu, community safety patrol shifts offer flexible work and improve safety for Yapa.



YWPP community researchers present feedback to Yuendumu Community

"We share the work, and the community is a safer place to be," community patroller Jordan Granites said.

Art centres in communities such as Lajamanu and Yuelamu give artists an income and keep

"WE CREATED OUR OWN JOBS WITH OUR LEASE MONEY. THAT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE FOR OUR PEOPLE." TITJIKALA RESIDENT ANDREW WILYUKA SAID.

GMAAAC-funded upgrades at the Nyirripi learning centre and recreation hall employed Yapa. Construction worker Nat Watson said this builds confidence and wellbeing.

"WE ARE PROUD OF DOING ALL THESE THINGS. WORKING IS GOOD FOR OUR HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH." NAT WATSON SAID.

Aboriginal people are also launching their own enterprises. Conrad Ratara runs Yalka Eco Stays, a cultural tourism and glamping business in Palm Valley. In Yuendumu, the local GMAAAC committee helped Robert Jampijinpa Robertson to establish Xtra Mile, a community-owned transport social enterprise serving the region.



Yeperenye Trail workers took a well-earned break for a photo

stories and knowledge strong. Locals also work on building projects, such as the Ntaria cemetery, the Alpurrurulam church and the Titjikala sports ground.

After two decades of the CLC's approach to community development, the lesson remain clear. Employment works best when it fits with culture, connects people with country and puts Aboriginal people in the lead from the start.



Yuendumu Pool Local lifeguards Jordan Hunter 2023 and Selina Hunter



Robbie Robertson and the Xtra Mile Transport Bus in Yuendumu

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CHAMPIONS

For 20 years, the Central Land Council's community development work has been led by strong Aboriginal leaders. These Community Development Champion stories celebrate the people who have made change happen through their leadership, ideas and hard work. Their voices help keep culture strong, create opportunities, and support their communities to thrive now and into the future.

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“OUR LEADERS ARE THE ONES THAT THE COMMUNITY PICKS, WHO LOOK AT STRATEGIES THAT CAN WORK FOR US AND USE THE MONEY TO HELP IN COMMUNITY. I BEEN A DIRECTOR FOR GMAAAC MANY YEARS AND WE LEARNED SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IN COMMUNITIES. AND THE PROBLEMS THAT WE FACE SOMETIMES, WE CAN ALWAYS REFLECT ON WHAT’S GOOD AND BAD AND COME UP WITH A STRATEGY TO START IN MOBILISING COMMUNITY. IT’S A BIG OPPORTUNITY, TO GET YOURSELF INTO THIS SORT OF WORK BECAUSE IT DEVELOPS YOUR MIND, WHO YOU WORKING FOR, RESPONSIBILITIES THAT YOU HAVE FOR YOUR COMMUNITIES. THEY LEARN FROM EACH OTHER TOO. THE PERSON WHO’S TEACHING, LEARNS FROM YOU, TEACHES THE ONE BEHIND – IT’S THE PROCESS THAT CAN GET OUR YOUNG PEOPLE INTO IT,” SAID CLC CHAIR WARREN WILLIAMS.

If you want to know more about the CLC's community development work please call 8951 6367



BELINDA NAPALJARRI WAYNE

Driven by a strong desire to give back, Belinda Napaljarri Wayne helped shape the future of communities through cultural programs, youth activities and community-led research.

As a CLC delegate, community researcher and member of the Marlpa Jungu Jintangka – Yuendumu’s child and family centre reference group Ms Wayne wants to make a difference.

For more than a decade she has been deeply involved with the Southern Ngaliya dance group which creates a space for school-aged girls to learn traditional dance, songlines and bush tucker, guided by elders and community leaders.

“IT’S REALLY GOOD TO SEE SO MANY YOUNG GIRLS INVOLVED. THEY’RE LEARNING WHO THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY COME FROM.”

Ms Wayne has also been a dedicated member of Yuendumu’s Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation committee for six years and previously was a director. She also helped to guide a GMAAAC-funded project that created murals on the women’s safe house, the Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri Media buildings, the Yuendumu police station and shop.

As a senior researcher for the past six years with the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust she works on community-driven research projects in Nyirripi, Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Willowra.

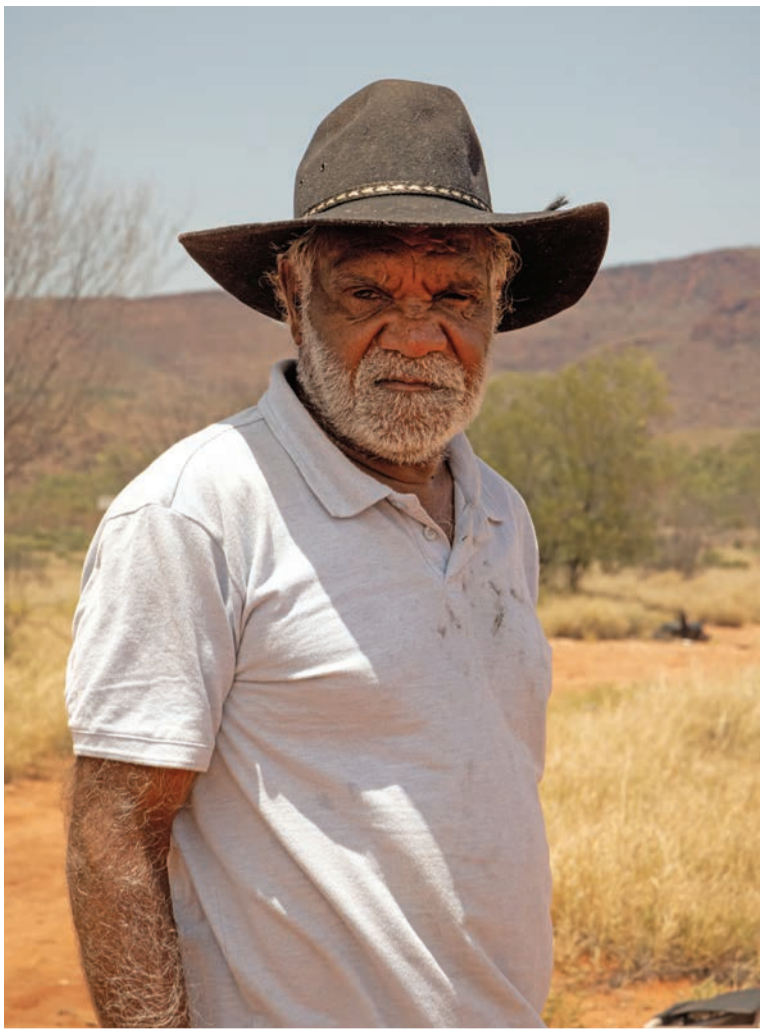
“We work on topics the communities choose,” she explained. “We meet with advisory groups, plan visits, run workshops and do interviews. Then we bring that information back to the WETT advisory members.”

Ms Wayne believes having local people lead research is essential. “We are respected in our own communities. We know who to talk to, and we follow Warlpiri protocols,” she said.

The response in Yuendumu has been positive, she said. Elders, family members and emerging leaders respect her role, allowing her to speak openly and gain permission before conducting interviews.

She hopes her journey inspires others. “We want more young people to get involved, to work together and support their families and community,” she said.

Ms Wayne said she never imagined how far it would go. “I started because my aunty invited me to join a reference group. It built my confidence and helped me become a stronger leader. I’m still learning, but I feel confident now.”



CONRAD RATARA

Conrad Ratara drew on 14 years of community development experience with the CLC to establish a glamping ground at Palm Valley.

The former long-term CLC delegate was part of three working groups that use income from land use agreements to plan and implement community projects before he struck out on his own family business.

“I THINK IT’S REALLY GOOD TO USE OUR OWN MONEY TO SPEND ON OUR OWN THING, USING THAT MONEY TO SPEND ON OUR OWN HOMELAND.”

Since 2014, the CLC has supported his Palm Valley tourism business, Yalka Eco Stays. Last May, he used parks rent income to fund the purchase of furniture for eight luxury tents. Each tent features comfy beds, a bathroom and outdoor settings.

Parks rent income has also paid for repairs to the old ranger station at Palm Valley, where Mr Ratara operates the business. It has funded tools for artefact making, business insurance and ongoing operational costs.

“I reckon community development really helped me a lot to run my business,” he said.

Mr Ratara helped create the ‘planning river’, a poster that illustrates the CLC’s community development process. He is still a member of the Finke Gorge Palm Paddock working group and continues to support the Ntaria working group. Now it’s time to devote himself more to his business.

“I feel I’ve been working with community development for a long time, but I’ve got to hand over to the young people now,” he said.



DAVID JAPANANGKA MCCORMACK

David Japanangka McCormack is passionate about making Yuelamu a better place for the community’s young people.

A member of Yuelamu’s Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation committee since 2011, he strives through master planning to improve infrastructure and services. The plan includes shady public spaces, lighting, footpaths, stormwater drainage, landscaping and better traffic management.

Yuelamu elected Mr McCormack as a CLC delegate in 2019.

“I ENJOY IT BECAUSE I GET TO HELP MY COMMUNITY OUT. THE CHANGES I SEE ARE GOOD, THE COMMUNITY IS BECOMING DIFFERENT AND BIGGER. GREW UP IN A TIN HOUSE, NOW IT’S HOUSES AND BITUMEN. EVERYTHING IS CHANGING IN FRONT OF MY EYES.”

A strong advocate for action against climate change, he was a member of the Australian government’s First Nations clean energy advisory committee in 2024/25. On the National Indigenous Australian Agency’s Aboriginal leadership group, he speaks up for affordable power and rent.

Good governance, cultural awareness and understanding how skin groups and family relations work are all important in developing community projects, he said. So are passing knowledge and responsibilities down the family line.

Mr McCormack hopes younger generations can learn from him so they, too, can become change makers.



KATHLEEN LUCKEY

Kathleen Luckey helps Imanpa thrive. She attends meetings, guides projects and makes sure local voices lead decisions in her community.

For more than a decade, she has worked on community-driven projects improving the daily lives of people in Imanpa and the other communities where the traditional owners of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park live. She serves as a CLC delegate, chairs Imanpa's local (government) authority and works with the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council who commands respect across the borders of the Northern Territory. She is also a director of the Iyanha Kularta Aboriginal Corporation and represents her community on the Angas Downs Indigenous Protected Area committee. In all these roles, she listens to the ideas of Imanpa residents and neighbouring communities and helps turn them into action.

Ms Luckey has worked on projects such as homeland upgrades and the construction of the Imanpa church and other community spaces. She strongly advocates for better housing – a major issue in Imanpa.

She values the way the wider Uluru rent money group makes decisions and enjoys seeing projects take shape.

“WE ALL GET TOGETHER IN A MEETING AT YULARA. EACH PERSON PUTS IN AN APPLICATION FOR THINGS WE NEED IN COMMUNITY, AND WE ALL AGREE TOGETHER AND TAKE TURNS.”

Ms Luckey takes pride in the difference the park rent and community lease money have made in Imanpa, especially the church, which stands as a symbol of community strength.

“For many years, people were just sitting under a tree for church services. Now people are happy. It's something the community is really proud of,” she explained.

She continues to back Anangu-led decision-making in the cross-border region, lead projects that strengthen her community and get young people involved.

“Good to come on board. Young people should come and sit with us at meetings. They can listen and learn — that's for the future.”



DEREK JAPANGARDI WILLIAMS

As a senior police constable in Yuendumu, Mr Williams works to build a safer and stronger community.

The CLC delegate has contributed to community-driven projects for more than six years. He chairs the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation, Yuendumu's school council, the NT Police Indigenous Association and serves as a cultural adviser for the Red Dust's role models program. Mr Williams supports funding this program, the WANTA youth program and the Yuendumu pool through the GMAAAC.

He believes Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people must work together respectfully, guided by cultural awareness and good governance, to build a stronger future for communities and organisations.

Early prevention for young people at risk of committing domestic violence and other crimes is close to his heart. He believes teaching young people the right way, creating opportunities and offering them positive activities are part of the solution.

He has helped plan upgrades to the local sports ovals, as well as cultural, health and sporting programs for young men.

“IF WE CAN DELIVER SUCCESSFUL EARLY PREVENTION, YOUNG PEOPLE MIGHT CHOOSE A DIFFERENT PATH IN LIFE AND SET THEMSELVES UP WITH JOBS.”

As part of the GMAAAC-funded Warlpiri Project, Mr Williams also takes part in finding and bringing home Yapa cultural items. In 2024 he travelled to Germany to retrieve significant objects and historical film footage from a museum in Frankfurt.

“It was a good investment for GMAAAC and for a good cause. Some of these objects are more than 100 years old,” he said.

Mr Williams encourages young people to believe in themselves and pursue their goals.

“Just be yourself. If you have a dream, follow it.”



PAM CORBETT

Pam Corbett is a leader who knows how to show up, listen, make sure local voices are heard and then take action for her community in Alpururulam (Lake Nash).

Along with her experience as a Central Land Council delegate, she has been working with the CLC's community development working group for almost 15 years. "Since the intervention lease money started coming in, that's when we decided to talk to the community about getting good water and building a church," she said.

"WE'RE HAPPY ABOUT THE CHURCH BECAUSE WE ONLY HAD A LITTLE TINY CHURCH BEFORE, AND NOW WE CAN DO MORE ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY. THE CHURCH HELPS KEEP THE YOUNG PEOPLE BUSY."

Ms Corbett is known for her ongoing fight for clean, safe water for Alpururulam. This 13-year project involved countless meetings, calls, letters and lobbying decision-makers in Alice Springs and Canberra.

"Learning how to speak up for the community and going to the meetings is special," she said.

Her patience and dedication were recognised in 2022, when she and CLC delegate Jackie Mahoney jointly won the NT Human Rights Award for Social Change for their efforts to secure drinkable water for their community.

"It's very special...because we have been doing a lot of things for Alpururulam," Ms Corbett told the ABC after accepting the award in Darwin.

She continues to fight for better quality water. "Everybody is looking forward to it and really want to see things happening. Not just promises, but action!"



JACKIE MAHONEY

Jackie Mahoney is a trusted leader who has spent many years standing up for the rights of people in Alpururulam (Lake Nash).

He is a CLC delegate, a member of the CLC's local community lease money working group, the Alpururulam local (government) authority, the community's church and store committees and the Ooratippra and Bonya native title-holder corporations. Mr Mahoney also spent years creating opportunities for local work and training through coordinating the Rainbow Gateway employment program and is now a board member of the organisation.

Strong decision-making and positive change in the community guide his work with all these groups. So is a concern for young people.

"I am encouraging more young people to be involved in the council, helping them to make healthy choices in the community," he said.

For more than 13 years, Mr Mahoney has been at the forefront of his community's fight for safe, clean drinking water. He has travelled across the country to advocate for this basic right and has personally lobbied former Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt. He is driven by a strong sense of responsibility to past and future generations.

"THAT'S WHY WE'RE FIGHTING FOR THIS WATER. IT'S NOT ONLY FOR US, IT'S FOR OUR OLD PEOPLE WHO FOUGHT BEFORE US AND OUR KIDS' FUTURE."

His ongoing efforts to secure drinkable water in Alpururulam saw him and Pam Corbett win the 2022 Northern Territory Human Rights Award for Social Change. "I am proud of working with the land council and how the council has helped with water problems in the community," he said. "I am proud of the Human Rights Award I won through this work."



CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL