

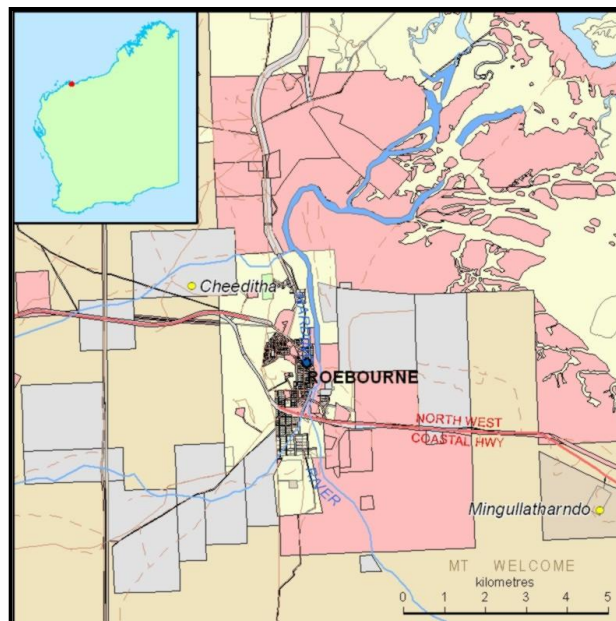


Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Indigenous Affairs**

# Roebourne Report

“Issues, Current Responses  
&  
Strategies for Consideration”

**July 2009**



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### **Background to Report:**

In April 2009, the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee (AACC), chaired by the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) Director General, identified 3 State priority place locations for coordinated effort in Indigenous Affairs through the assistance of a Chief Coordinating Officer (COO).

Roebourne is one of these locations.

As such DIA Pilbara office is providing this report as part of Stage 1: Mapping of Issues and Services, along with offering a “snap-shot” overview and reference document for the Roebourne agencies and wider community.

*Please note:* Due to limited resources, including some delays in receiving information this report may not cover all programs active in the community.

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## **ROEBOURNE**

Roebourne has a population of close to 1000 people, with approximately 75% being Aboriginal. The town of Roebourne is located in the local government area of the Shire of Roebourne and is 1,500kms north of Perth and 40kms north of Karratha on the North West Coastal Highway.

Roebourne is a community that has had considerable historical issues relating to the dispossession and oppression of Aboriginal people, welfare dependency and high unemployment.

### **Native Title Determination:**

In June 2007 a native title determination in favour of Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi peoples was made. There are separate Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi boundaries within the Roebourne claim area. Ngarluma covers the town of Roebourne. (Further details in section 8)

### **The surrounding Aboriginal communities include:**

- Mingullatharndo / 5-Mile: A small community just north of Roebourne supporting an alcohol free and positive lifestyle environment
- Ngurrawaana: A community 70 klms SSW of Roebourne near Millstream-Chichester National Park in Yindjibarndi country, founded in 1983, and,
- Cheeditha: A town-based reserve 3 klms south of Roebourne.

### **Government Services with a base in Roebourne include:**

WA Country Health, Education, TAFE, WA Police, Child Protection and Corrective Services; along with general community services of Post Office, Shire Community Hall, and Tele-centre

Most government workers (except for Police) live in Karratha or Wickham and travel to Roebourne each day.

### **Community Services in Roebourne:**

They range from large non-government organisations with a number of programs to smaller groups with a key focus.

Most of these are highlighted in this report and include programs provided through Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service, Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation, Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation, Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation Limited, Marnda Mia Limited, Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation, Roebourne Arts Groups and Yaandina Family Services, plus the volunteer services of the fire and emergency, St John Ambulance and the Aboriginal church.

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## **ROEBOURNE REPORTS:**

Roebourne has been subject of, or highlighted in numerous ministerial briefings, reports and studies over many years.

### **In more recent times briefings, reports / studies / agreements include<sup>1</sup>:**

- 2001: Hedland / Roebourne Alcohol Misuse Report: Conducted by the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI), Curtin University, the report was undertaken through Bloodwood Tree Association (BTA) in South Hedland and the Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service (MAHS) in Roebourne to evaluate and report on substance misuse in both the towns.
- 2003: Trees Report: While this report initially set out to understand how customary law and traditional belief systems function in people's lives it also raised real concerns about the social problems in the community: Issues included level of alcohol and violence, sexual abuse, pornography, school non-attendance, disciplining children, living conditions and health.
- 2003: Relspreet Report: A feasibility study into establishing alcohol and other drug rehabilitation service/s in the Pilbara Region, specifically in the Port Hedland and Roebourne areas that was conducted on behalf of BTA and presented to the Commonwealth Government's Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH).
- 2004: Pilbara School Attendance Research Project: (Anne Mead). Areas covered include cross cultural difference, importance of relationships, school home connections, poor attendance and parent participation.
- 2005: Finding a Place: An Inquiry into the existence of discriminatory practices in relation to the provision of public housing and related services to Aboriginal people in WA. (Roebourne representation in report).
- 2006: Pilbara Iron Taylor Scambry Report on Indigenous People and the Mining Boom: This report provided baseline data and projections highlighting the age profile showing that 47% of the Pilbara Aboriginal population are below the age of 19 years, (this is projected to reach 62% by the year 2016) along with Aboriginal peoples concerns on work, health, education, literacy, housing, justice and poverty.
- 2006: DCD Roebourne Briefing: Author Damien Miles (Previous DCD District Director), highlighting significant social issues, and suggested responses. It identified research that supports a middle ground on dealing with the issue requiring a determined attempt to clean up the way resources are delivered by Government and give power back to the community in the true sense of the word<sup>2</sup>. Whilst it is not a starting again, it requires a fresh look and decisions to utilise resources in the most beneficial way, rather than on the basis of history.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: This is not a comprehensive list – copies of most reports can be provided by the DIA Pilbara office

<sup>2</sup> "Child Abuse and Neglect in Indigenous Australian Communities", (Stanley, Tominson & Pocock, in Child Abuse Prevention Issues, National Child Protection Clearing House, No. 19 Spring 2003)

### **Roebourne Reports cont...**

- 2007: Twomey Report: An education, training and employment review of Roebourne for the Pilbara Industry Community Council (PICC). Three gaps identified were pre-natal program, Indigenous knowledge hub, and, an Indigenous teacher program. The report highlighted that governance and management must be developed by means of good communication and collaboration with the local community.
- 2007: 'Youth and the Future' – Avoiding a By-pass Boom: South Hedland Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) discussion paper – (Author Tim Turner)
- 2009: Report 'Early Years Group Action Planning' for West Pilbara Communities (Roz Walker)
- 2009 Roebourne Settlement Profile: Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) in partnership with the Shire of Roebourne (draft)

### **Other earlier interesting reading and viewing includes:**

- They get heaps: a study of attitudes in Roebourne, WA, (Mary Edmunds)
  - An Aboriginal Death in Custody: the case of John Pat. Published in: Wayward governance : illegality and its control in the public sector by P. Grabosky
  - Exile and the Kingdom [videorecording] by Roger Solomon (deceased)
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## **CURRENT SITUATION**

*The significant social issues in the community of Roebourne include:*

### **1. ALCOHOL MISUSE ISSUES:**

Social issues in Roebourne (and across the Pilbara) are exacerbated by high levels of alcohol consumption and other drug use. The Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO) alcohol consumption statistics show:

- Western Australia average at 10 pure litres of alcohol per capita consumption
- Pilbara average at 16 pure litres of alcohol per capita consumption, and,
- Shire of Roebourne alcohol consumption is at 26.8 pure litres of alcohol

### **Alcohol Abuse – Need for Rehabilitation:**

Over the years, along with the evidential data showing that the Pilbara consumes twice the national average of pure alcohol per head, numerous reports and consultations have been undertaken by Government and non-Government (14 in the Pilbara). A need for rehabilitation services has been central in nearly all these reports. In many of these reports, Roebourne and South Hedland have been identified as key locations. In 2008, the Australian Government announced a commitment for rehabilitation for the Pilbara region, with a facility to be located in South Hedland. The consultancy group ARUP is progressing discussion with the Roebourne and Hedland community around Aboriginal expectations for this service delivery.

### **Alcohol-related hospitalisations, Shire of Roebourne 2002-2006:**

The rates of alcohol-related hospitalisations for both males and females in Roebourne for the period 2002-2006 were higher than corresponding State rates. There were a total of 630 alcohol-related hospitalisations at a cost of \$2,384,033. Below are Emergency Department Presentations for alcohol-related issues for Roebourne residents to hospitals in surrounding towns:

<b>Hospital</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>
Roebourne	2006/07	309
	2007/08	314
Nickol Bay	2006/07	73
	2007/08	79
Wickham	2006/07	18
	2007/08	22
		815

### **Access to Alcohol:**

With the only Roebourne hotel (Victoria Hotel) closing in 2005, residents of Roebourne purchase alcohol at the neighbouring towns of Wickham and Karratha. Community feedback indicates most people drive to Wickham 12 kilometres away (including in unregistered vehicles via 'back tracks') to make their purchase of alcohol supplies which is often in high quantities, and then return to Roebourne where many consume in a continuous 'binge drinking session'.

While there are no current liquor restrictions in neighbouring towns of Wickham and Karratha, a number of agencies have recently met to progress the implement of an alcohol management plan to cover the Roebourne shire area and the town of Onslow.

From information gathered around the town, there is also a high use of Marijuana in the Roebourne area and there is an increasing issue with young people gaining access to drugs and alcohol.

**Agency comments:**

- The Department of Child Protection (DCP) has stated that alcohol abuse is a high contributing factor in Roebourne for issues relating to protecting children and violence in families. A lowering of alcohol misuse would increase family functioning and child safety.
- The WA Police (WAPOL) Pilbara Superintendent John Ballantyne has stated that the array of health issues and dysfunctional or anti-social behaviours as a result of alcohol includes: domestic violence, assaults, drunkenness, property damage and theft, child protection issues and generally disorderly conduct, to name but a few.
- Police have noted that up to 80% of offences committed in Roebourne are alcohol related, and the recently appointed Officer-in-Charge Gavin Carter is keen to work closely with the community to bring about change.
- Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service (MAHS) CEO Joyce Trust has stated they have had 441 alcohol related episodes of care treated by doctors, 71 chronic disease patients with direct alcohol cause during the past year.

**Alcohol and substance related services in Roebourne include:**

- a. Pilbara Community Drug Service Team (through the WA Country Health Services): Based in Karratha, provide a visiting counsellor / educator service to Roebourne.
- b. Pilbara Alcohol & Drug Aboriginal Program (PADAP): Based in Karratha, provide a visiting counsellor / educator service to Roebourne via the MAHS.
- c. Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service (MAHS): MAHS provides a drug & alcohol nutritional health promotions programs delivered to clients affected by drug and alcohol, along with hosting the visiting PADAP service.
- d. Yaandina Family Services Incorporated (YFSI): Manage the Roebourne Sobering up Centre funded through State Health, and the Mingga Bus Patrol funded through DIA which both operates 4 evenings each week, and at community events. YFSI are currently looking to extend the evening bus Patrol to assist youth on the streets.
- e. Roebourne Prison: Alcohol and drug programs provided at Roebourne prison have a rehabilitative focus and aim to reduce the risks of alcohol and drug abuse reoccurring in inmates once they are released. The drug and alcohol services are provided in conjunction with the Pilbara community drug service team

**Strategies in Development, or for Consideration:**

- a. Alcohol Management Plan – West Pilbara area: DAO, WAPOL, DIA, WA Country Health Service, Shire, Local Aboriginal Justice Agreement Chair and Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service met recently to commence this

strategy. The group, chaired by WAPOL Pilbara Superintendant John Ballantyne, is continuing to gather data and information required to a) make application to the Director of Liquor Licensing under Section 64 of the Act for Liquor Restrictions within the 5 towns in the Shire of Roebourne and Onslow; and b), review the existing alcohol and health programs with a view to improve alcohol education and support services to reduce harm.

- b. Pilbara Rehabilitation Facility: This facility (Federal Government's commitment for substance and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment service in the Pilbara) will be established in South Hedland but will also provide support to Roebourne and other Pilbara residents. Consultants are currently undertaking the scope of works with an agreed plan expected by late July 2009.
- c. The Mingullatharndo Community (5-Mile): Have given an 'open invitation' for anyone seeking to 'get off the grog' and make a change in their lives to live out at the community. (Note: This place has a proven track record, but its effectiveness to support this change is now seriously hampered by overcrowding in the existing residences in the community and having to cart potable water in from town)

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## **2. CHILDREN & YOUTH ISSUES:**

### **Safety and Wellbeing:**

**'Miles Briefing' DCD 2006 stated:** *"In discussing the environment, it must be remembered that Roebourne is a small town. As is usual in small towns, children will often congregate and adults assume their children are with other children and at one of a number of usual locations. It is not unusual for carers to know that a child will be at a range of locations rather than at a specific location. Of course, there are also carers who do not have any idea of their children's whereabouts. However, the issue regarding The Village is that the environment is not healthy for young children on certain nights, in that they are unable to sleep, supervision appears to be lacking, and they are more likely to witness or be a victim of violence or sexual abuse. There is little doubt that children who live in The Village would feel safer away from many of the houses on busy drinking nights"* This is still relevant today in 2009.

### **Agencies 'on-the-street' at night:**

Apart from the Mingga Patrol, and the support provided by Sobering-up Centre and the Women's Shelters, the Police are the only organisation operating the front line during the night. The DIA regional manager attended Roebourne on the evening of Thursday 16 April 2009 with the local Police. Thursday is normally an active day so it is usual to see many people drinking on this night. In the Village housing area, people were gathering and drinking at the front of a several houses. There were people at these houses ranging from 10 to approximately 30 people including many children, and large numbers of dogs. Across from the Village near the edge of the old cemetery several young boys hung out on the fence. The Village atmosphere was like a noisy party, with many people drinking or drunk and enjoying themselves. Police advised that under such conditions it was expected that they would be called to an incident, most likely a domestic later in the evening. Children (some quite small) were still independently playing, and it would be very difficult to sleep and it appeared that supervision was ad-hoc.

### **Agency comments:**

- Department of Child Protection (DCP) in Roebourne highlights that given that identified issues in Roebourne are around alcohol abuse, family and domestic violence and neglect of these children these issues effect children and youth differently. For children 0 to 4, witnessing violence and trauma has long term emotional and developmental impacts. Non attendance of school is a major issue for older children. Non attendance that leads to marginalisation from mainstream society.
- Department of Corrective Services (DCS) identified there are currently 23 active juvenile case clients in Roebourne, and that there are 76 current referrals to the Juvenile Justice Team. DCS acting Regional Manager Jasmyn Tobin highlights that considering the high numbers of young people in Roebourne a significant amount of attention needs to focus on young people.
- Police note high rates of DV and child neglect, having interviewed kids at 2am walking the street. Major number of burglaries are by kids to get food.
- The DCP has identified they currently have 43 cases open to the Roebourne office, there are 15 children in care residing in Roebourne; DCP are working with 25 families; and in the past month 8 new referrals have been received. The key areas of concern that lead to children being removed from their parents are in relation to parental alcohol abuse. Main themes of referrals are:
  - Children wandering the street late at night (this is mostly as a result of the Police led "Operation Fuego").
  - Domestic violence and alleged physical abuse
  - Concerning sexualised behaviours
  - Neglect particularly in relation to lack of supervision or parental misuse
- Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service (MAHS) operations manager Danny Brown highlights a real need for increased "parenting programs" to learn good parenting skills. Families need to recognize that much of their kids' behaviour is unacceptable.
- Australian Government: The Commonwealth's regional office has stated that their concerns reflect those of the general community particularly youth related issues, children at risk, truancy and youth crime.
- Pilbara Strong Families Program: The observation of the recently appointed Strong Families Coordinator Tim Turner, is that significant barriers exist to government collaboration which limit outcomes for children and young people across the Pilbara, and these barriers include
  - Narrow interpretation of core business for agencies by some field staff, with a lack of innovative and flexible practice
  - Chronic lack of resources, housing and service models
  - Application of processes which are irrelevant and ineffectual for the most marginalised and disadvantaged clients

**DCP changes:** During June 2009, DCP implemented some local changes. These are:

- Weeriana Children's Hostel (located in Roebourne) received a major structural upgrade. Funds for increase in staffing occurred in 2008 and training is in process. The hostel is a district placement and is now at full capacity.
- The Roebourne DCP office has been upgraded from a sub office controlled by Karratha to an independent office with its own leader and intake systems ("duty system"). Staff has been increased to 8 workers.

### **Youth Feedback:**

The DIA regional manager met with a group of Roebourne youth at the Youth Centre during the breakfast program on a Friday in April to listen to their concerns and seek feedback on reason for children on the streets at night. The reasons given for children being on the streets range from children having nothing else to do, through to their house not being safe because people are drinking, there is violence, or they are afraid of people staying at the house.

### **Youth Centre Feedback:**

While all departments regularly meet to discuss and plan strategies, the youth centre manager Kai Shanks suggested that increased engagement with youth – in an ‘out of an office’ environment is required to gain the trust of the youth. This could be on-the-streets, at the youth centre and at town recreational activities. Practical engagement (coming to the centre, cooking breakfast, playing pool, leading a behavioural or recreational activity) and spending regular time hanging out doing positive ‘stuff’ with their youth clients to get to know them, including outside office hours, is part of the solution.

The centre manager highlighted that much more support needed to be directed at young females as they are particularly vulnerable.

A key concern raised was that crimes such as ‘break and enter’ are now viewed as the ‘right-of-passage’ for many Roebourne youth, particularly those who have lost touch with a respectful culture and their place in the family and wider community. Four break-ins to the youth centre in the first two weeks of June 2009 coincided with the return from Rangeview of youth in the justice system.

### **Media:**

Recent articles in the Pilbara News have highlighted the number of children and youth on the streets late at night.

### **Service and supports to address child safety and well being include:**

- a. Roebourne Child Safety Group: Established in 2008 the membership includes DCP, Police, Justice, Education, Population Health, YFSI, Housing and other key stakeholders. This group chaired by the DCP team leader is outcome focussed with specific tasks. Key items of discussion are offending behaviours, truancy, kids on streets at night and a core group of consistent contacts.
- b. Roebourne Youth Service: This service managed through Yaandina Family Services Incorporated (YFSI) with core funding from the DCP provides a 5-day a week after-school “drop-in-centre” service where activities are centred on four outcomes: 1) young people’s ability to manage their lives, 2) reduce risky behaviour, 3) reduce criminal activity, and 4) improve relations with family, school and community. The youth centre also provides a number of activities external to the centre such as camps, media, dance and sports. This service which often operates with a single youth worker for 50+ youth in any one evening has highlighted the need for additional capacity, along with support from agencies to enable them to achieve their desired outcomes.

- c. Girls Group: DCP support a Girls Groups operated through the YFSI Child Sexual Assault Therapist.
- d. Shire of Roebourne: Currently employs a Youth Development Officer for Roebourne that visits on a regular basis. The Shire of Roebourne has also undertaken other youth centred work in the community, including managing the community swimming pool.
- e. Mingga Patrol bus: Provides an occasional evening transport service where it picks up the younger children and returns them home. A Mingga Patrol worker advised the DIA regional manager, that on drinking nights locating a responsible adult for some children may be difficult.
- f. Strong Families Program: Managed through the DCP has recently re-commenced family casework in Roebourne. It is expected that this number may increase though resources are limited to one person managing this Pilbara-wide program
- g. Best Start: The Department for Communities (DfC) is looking to re-commence the Best Start program in Roebourne that will focus on preparing children for school but also take a holistic approach that looks at health, bringing up strong children etc.
- h. Child Care Centre: The YFSI operates a 20 place child care centre for children aged 0-5 years
- i. Family Support and Parenting Program: The YFSI employs a children and family counsellor for the 'Safe Children Makes Stronger Children' (SCMSC) program and 'Being Proud Parents' parenting program (Counselling to individuals and children, and facilitates groups for children, young people and families who have been affected by sexual and physical abuse and neglect)
- j. Department of Sport & Recreation: DSR in partnership with Industry has an Indigenous funded position in Roebourne to undertake specific recreational programs and other activities to support at-risk youth through increased participation in sport and physical activity; and opportunity into specific training and up-skilling.

### **Communities for Children (CfC) Funding:**

The Pilbara Community Council, a recently formed non-government organisation based in Karratha has been identified to receive funds through the Communities for Children grant to assist in prevention and early intervention programs to support children and families in the West Pilbara.

### **'Early Childhood Development Centres':**

During 2007 the Pilbara District Education Office and the PDC undertook research on 'Early Childhood Development Centres' as a possible strategic approach to addressing many of the identified educational barriers, including some of those outlined in the above 'Twomey Report'.

### **Measuring Young Children's Development:**

In a recent Early Years workshop held in Karratha, Dr Roz Walker presented the following AEDI 2008 information which identifies the five developmental domains for



- “No school – no pool” partnership with Shire operated pool (partnership with the Youth Centre also now established). This has good impact when pool is open, but little or no impact when pool closed (4/5 months each year)
- Roebourne Football Academy established 2009
- Allotted teacher home visits, and case conferencing for specific students with involvement of other stakeholders, along with visual attendance charts in classrooms

Ms Barrie states the programs in place to target attendance are linked strongly with behaviour, community participation, and student engagement; and, she also highlights that while educational outcomes are poor, there are issues with lack of support from some parents and that they are working collaboratively with other government agencies in town to address this and encourage and support student attendance. School classrooms and times were realigned at end 2008 to assist in addressing student behaviour, attendance and performance.

#### **Ngurrawaana School:**

Concerns have been raised regarding the continued education of the community’s children should the small government school close due to the small number of students. A decision on the future of the school had not been determined at time of writing this report.

#### **Pilbara Industry Community Council (PICC) education report:**

During 2007 the PICC engaged Professor Lance Twomey to undertake community consultation and produce a report as part of a review on education, training and employment. This resulted in the 2007 “Twomey Report” (Roebourne Education, Training & Employment Review): Report identified an “Indigenous Knowledge Hub” as a priority outcome for Roebourne to tackle literacy and numeracy problems in adolescents and young adults incorporating a larger picture emphasising pride in their own culture, heritage and knowledge systems and providing incentives for attendance. The “Knowledge Hub” would incorporate existing programs supported by government, industry and the community, expanded to include three (3) new directions:

- Pre-natal to 5 years of age: education, health, nutrition, life-skills for parents (especially mothers) and infants;
- Programs to enable adolescent and adult literacy and numeracy within an environment wherein Aboriginal languages, culture and knowledge systems are developed, taught and celebrated IE. The very core or heart of the Knowledge Hub;
- An approach to enable Teaching Assistants to become fully qualified teachers within a 3-5 year period, ensuring local stability in education and career opportunities for others.

#### **Cultural Maintenance Education (CME):**

During community consultations held in 2008 the concept of CME was raised. Further discussions facilitated by DIA identified that what CME meant to Aboriginal people was new learning styles. Instead of learning occurring inside the classroom, CME encourages learning to happen outside – on country – out in the bush...but that the content could link to the eight learning areas of the government curriculum framework through following Aboriginal ways. The school was considered a key stakeholder in supporting the development and implementation of CME.

A basic draft proposal has been prepared for initial discussion and this may sit comfortably within the recommendations of the Twomey Report.

### **Youth Centre Situation:**

A raft of risk factors caused the closure of the youth centre building by the youth service provider YFSI in late 2008. The loss of the centre has had an enormous impact on the Roebourne community as it undertakes a number of programs, including 'drop in', sports, homework activities and behavioural and mentoring programs. The space, in its dilapidated state, was a focal point for young people and their families in Roebourne. These issues and the unsuitable placement and layout of the building have been discussed in Roebourne over the past six years. The youth centre program now operates from a temporary building owned by the DCP.

### **Roebourne Youth Precinct Master-plan:**

To support change and address some of the issues the Pilbara Development Commission (PDC) is working with stakeholders to finalise the development of the Roebourne Youth Precinct Master-plan (RYPM). The RYPM was developed as a component of the Roebourne Enhancement Scheme, a State Government funded initiative that was managed by the PDC between 2003/2006. The RYPM was identified by the Roebourne community as critical to addressing a lack of youth orientated facilities. The RYPM was also designed to provide a range of youth facilities in a safe and secure environment in the main area of the town. The RYPM is located between the Roebourne School and the town swimming pool and is being developed in stages. The first stage was completed in 2006 and included covered multi use courts, lights, kiosk and ablutions to accommodate a range of recreation activities. The second stage was the relocation of the town oval in 2007 to the Roebourne School as a shared facility. The final two stages are the development of a purpose built youth centre and an upgrade of the community hall.

- To establish the new youth centre concept designs have been completed and a business study is being developed. Estimated cost is \$3.5m. The PDC has seed funding of \$370,000, Lotterywest has indicated informally that it may contribute up to \$1.25m and Woodside Energy has indicated that it will consider an application for funding. Subject to securing all of the funding required, it is hoped that construction of the Centre will commence in early 2010.
- The upgrade of the Community Hall is being undertaken by the Shire of Roebourne.

### **Strategies in Development, or for Consideration:**

- a. Revisit and implement recommendations of the "Twomey Report" (Roebourne Education, Training & Employment Review) which identified an "Indigenous Knowledge Hub", along with the strategies highlighted in the Early Childhood Development Centre approach as a priority outcome for Roebourne to tackle literacy and numeracy problems in children, adolescents and young adults
- b. Capacity Build Youth Service provider/s: Alongside the development of the Youth Precinct, explore areas of support to capacity build youth program service provision to enable extended operational hours and provide further practical support and services to youth.
- c. Youth Service Provider/s & Agencies Protocols: All youth oriented agencies explore the development of a service partnership protocol / MOU between

youth service provider/s and their own agency to enable increased engagement and a regular link with the Youth Centre and other external activities so as to build a relationship with youth / clients in a non confrontational environment.

- d. Youth Night Patrol: Capacity build and support efforts to implement an evening bus Patrol to assist youth on the streets post midnight on targeted evenings

**Other community lead initiatives in early stage discussion include:**

- a. Bush Camp School: This concept in early stages of discussion in the community is based around fostering both reconciliation, and understanding and awareness of Aboriginal culture along with promoting local flora and fauna studies
- b. Youth Work Camp: An alternative to sending Roebourne and other Pilbara offending youth away to the Rangeview detention centre, this concept could include learning new skills, work preparedness, behavioural aspects and cultural awareness to support discipline in an environment where youth are supported in making positive lifestyle changes

Both these initiatives would be beneficial to the wider Pilbara community and need further serious discussion.

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**3. FAMILY & OTHER VIOLENCE ISSUES:**

**Family and other violence is a significant issue in Roebourne. Feedback during the writing of this report included:**

- Aboriginal people in Roebourne are specifically concerned about the levels of alcohol related violence in the community.
- Domestic and or family violence was identified by most people as a 'big problem'.
- People explicitly linked heavy drinking with domestic violence, stating that alcohol makes men become aggressive and jealous. Sexual jealousy in particular, was said to be heightened when people were drinking.
- Family breakdown is commonly seen by the community of Roebourne as alcohol-related, and many people saw children as the worst victims.
- People described dysfunctional families where children are left to fend for themselves and their younger siblings, with those children experiencing a lack of incentive to attend school.
- Lack of proper meals and adequate sleep because of drinking parties also means children are often unable to perform well at school.
- The quantity of reported offences is significant, particularly given the relatively small population of the town and in comparison to other Pilbara townships, is well out of proportion.

The prison facility in the Pilbara is located at Roebourne which has been designed for a capacity of 116 prisoners. The total prisoner population at Roebourne Prison at July 2007 was 177 prisoners. In 2007, the average daily percentage of Aboriginal prisoners at Roebourne was 84%.

### **Agency / Community comments:**

- The WAPOL Pilbara District Office has stated in recent correspondence to the DIA that a great concern is the number of assaults that are recorded within the town. During the period February 2008 to February 2009 there were:
  - 59 domestic related and 56 non-domestic related assaults reported
  - 10 reported sexual assaults
  - 41 reports of acts of threatening behaviour
  - 4 reports of deprivation of liberty, and
  - 171 reports of property damage
- The Department of Corrective Services advised that of these 59 persons on assault related community correction orders in Roebourne, 47 are males.
- The Pilbara Aboriginal Justice Agreement co-chair has stated there has been an increase in family feuds during past few months, and also highlights that division in Roebourne also contributes to local issues.
- Roebourne Strong Women's Group feedback highlighted that some years ago there was a Police and community relationship committee which is reported to have been very effective. It operated preventively and made a closer link between police and community, whereas mediation service (although needed) is after something has happened and not seen by the women as having the same potential.

### **Healing Centre (Hub):**

The Roebourne Strong Women's group have continued discussion to establish and 'grow' their Healing Centre (hub) concept that will provide traditional, community-based, culturally appropriate and therapeutic forms of healing to improve the spirit and mental health of the community. Stage 1: The current focus is on locally developed protective behaviours program for Roebourne – and the Safe Children Make Stronger Children Program is now in place. The women further developed Stage 2: an Indigenous Parenting Program with a group of Aboriginal women as co-developers with the SCMSC program, with the Strong Women's Group as the reference group. The women have put together a concept paper on how they view this 'Hub'.

### **Roebourne Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA):**

The Roebourne AJA local plan which was signed in 2007 has identified three key areas for action:

- Inadequate court and support services
- Inadequate lawyer / advocacy representation services
- The need to establish a Roebourne relationship and mediation group for interaction between local police and the community

### **Safety of the Elderly:**

Safety of the elderly has been highlighted as an increasing concern, with abuse raised as a frequent occurrence, in particular during weekends when limited external support is available. Also noted were the increased threats of violence, abuse and stealing towards elderly people living in the village by children and youth.

**Domestic and family violence related services for Roebourne include:**

- a. Support and shelter is provided at Manga Tharndu Maya (Roebourne Safe House) is managed by MAHS and funded through the DCP.
- b. Roebourne Strong Women's Group is a reference group to the Safe Children Make Stronger Children Program, and the Indigenous Parenting Program
- c. DCP will finalise the implementation of the Safe Child Safe Places program in early June 2009.
- d. MAHS are soon to officially open the Men's Social Wellbeing House in Sholl Street, where men can be supported and services provided.

**Strategies in Development, or for Consideration:**

- a. AJA Key Priorities: Appropriate agencies work alongside the AJA reference group to further develop and implement key priorities as per the local justice plan
- b. Circle Court: DIA regional manager and Clerk of Courts Karratha recently commenced discussion to further explore the idea of implementing a "Circle Court" with Elders within Roebourne. This idea has been raised by the community to assist in resolving and identifying appropriate responses to community crime
- c. Healing Centre Hub: Appropriate agencies consider further discussions with the Strong Women's Group to ascertain requirements and if there are levels of support to develop such a concept.

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**4. GAMBLING ISSUES:**

Local card games are played for long periods particularly on pay days and this is seen as a significant problem leading to child neglect. One particular house has so much money passing hands that it is known as "Centrelink". Whilst people usually aren't drinking during this time, they are not looking after their children. This issue ties into that of unsupervised children and child neglect discussed earlier. Other results of gambling include the loss of sums of money to feed and care for children.

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**5. OVERCROWDING & HOUSING ISSUES:**

Many families in the Roebourne area travel between the areas of South Hedland, Onslow Tom Price and Roebourne. Some of the families, particularly in the Village area can have 15 to 20 people living in their homes at any one time. With the Regional Prison being located 10 kms west of Roebourne, many family members of inmates come to Roebourne to live. This places an extra strain on those family members living in the Roebourne area.

The Shire of Roebourne indicates that there are a total of 199 residential dwellings in Roebourne; 100 dwellings are allocated to Public Housing (including Aboriginal) and another 24 are allocated to Government Regional Officers Housing [GROH]<sup>4</sup>, with remainder privately-owned dwellings.

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Housing

### **Housing Waiting-list:**

While the Department of Housing shows a waiting list with low numbers' this is in contradiction to the consistent community feedback that there is significant overcrowding in public housing. It is understood that many people do not place their name on a waiting list due to various reasons however there is a hidden demand.

### **Trees Report 2003:**

Overcrowding, as well as historical factors, social and environmental factors were raised by community members and highlighted in the "Trees Report" as having an influence on family and domestic violence.

Report quote: *"A young woman in her twenties who I spoke with said that the inadequate housing makes it impossible to keep people who have been drinking away from the children. Older women have also confirmed this. The young woman said that everyone may be in the yards and on the streets, playing with the other kids until after dark but when they go inside they cannot isolate themselves from the drinkers and often they will not know that they need to try and do this. She said this often results in neglect, family violence and sexual abuse of women and children. As one older woman said," they might just crawl over people and get to a girl. They don't even know what they are doing."*

### **Homeless / Squatters:**

Over a long period of time concerns have also been raised regarding the 15, mostly elderly homeless (squatters) residing at the Mt Welcome Homestead on the edge of Roebourne town. With no running water, ablutions and rubbish disposal facilities; along with their lifestyle factors many of the residents are in poor health. Concerns have been raised by several agencies regarding health and in particular the high level of communicable diseases. Owners of the Homestead would like to see the residents removed to a safe and suitable location and have the homestead restored to its original structure. A number of agencies are currently meeting to discuss options and progress, with the "Chook Farm" property on the northern edge of town being upgraded as a possibly solution.

### **Roebourne Village:**

Much of the Village housing is degraded and in very poor condition and is in need of repairs and maintenance. Approximately 30% of the Village area is now land with no housing.

### **Agency comments:**

- The DoH regional manager Joanne Gordon believes that alcohol is the trigger for many of the issues in Roebourne, and that the consumption of alcohol in public housing properties throughout Roebourne is escalating with family members creating overcrowding issues.
- The DCP team leader states that the community have reported that one of the contributing reasons for children being on the street late at night is due to often needing to find a bed to sleep, and there have been comments made that for some children it is a first in first served basis for their bed for the night.

- Roebourne Strong Women's Group stated that several houses were needed with a roofed but open central area, with gates to keep animals and unwanted intruders out, enabling extended families to live in the same house and those preferring to sleep outside (often the older people) to be safe. When surveyed in 2002 some community people also wanted houses built in family blocks (in town), and that this had not yet happened.

#### **Housing and Accommodation Support Services in Roebourne:**

- Department of Housing (DoH) have an officer visit Roebourne each Monday to deal with day to day concerns
- Pilbara Community Legal Service (PCLS) provide a Supported Accommodation Housing Assistance Program (funded through DoH)
- Frail Aged Hostel: YFSI operate this 9-bed hostel to frail and aged. The hostel is a fully accredited facility.
- Sobering-up Centre: The centre operated through YFSI provides evening accommodation (4 days per week) to intoxicated persons.
- Manga Tharndu Maya (Roebourne Safe House): Emergency shelter is provided at this service managed by MAHS and funded through the DCP.

#### **Strategies in Development, or for Consideration:**

- a. Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) Initiatives: The NAC has two housing and infrastructure proposals to Government:
  - Ngarluma Aboriginal Sustainable Housing Project (NASH) is approximately 50 hectares of land (400 blocks) for a 'model' community in a managed suburb. Subdivision of this land would create a significant number of housing lots, and provide for community facilities. This initiative is in early stages of development and the NAC are currently planning to undertake further community consultations.
  - Proposal to build houses and recreational facilities on existing vacant land in the old Roebourne Village area, and then to gradually refurbish the balance of the housing stock.
- b. Roebourne Village Revitalisation: The State consider working alongside the NASH project to ensure that with the expected taking up of housing in the new suburb that it does not lead to neglecting the existing Village area where a number of people will continue to reside. It is suggested in this report that the State undertakes a significant revitalisation and improvement program within the Village area houses and surrounding environment. This should include undertaking a review of public housing to determine the level of overcrowding in the community
- c. Relocation of Homeless (Squatters): The NAC are driving a project and working with the DIA, Shire, MAHS, CDEP, Health agencies and Mt Welcome Pastoral Company to identify the infrastructure, responsibilities and requirements needed to relocate the 15 'squatters' from the old homestead building to the "Chook Farm" property near town. This move will require across-agency cooperation, and the facility will require significant upgrade before the relocation can take place. There are concerns for the health conditions of the 'squatters' in the current location.
- d. Frail Aged Care Expansion Proposal: The YFSI are undertaking plans for expanding their frail aged care hostel to provide an additional ten beds and upgrade facilities. Designs and costing are complete, though funding for facility is yet to be secured. There is a high need for these additional beds. Use of

- State Health department hospital facilities (currently under-utilised) may be an option to consider as a solution and should be further explored.
- e. Marnda Mia: Seeking support to refurbish the old Victoria Hotel to provide accommodation for Aboriginal job seekers while they undertake training.
  - f. Housing for employees of Non-Government Organisations (NGO's): Sustaining NGO's in Roebourne in the changing Pilbara environment where housing shortages and high rental costs of \$1,000 plus per week is an area that requires urgent support. This is further highlighted in the PANGO information on page 25:
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## **6. HEALTH ISSUES**

The life expectancy of Indigenous persons is typically around 15 – 20 years less than that of non- Indigenous persons<sup>5</sup>. ABS 2006 Census data suggests that the life expectancy of people in Roebourne is well below that of mainstream Australia. It is recognized that there are many factors impacting upon life expectancy:

- Lifestyle factors, such as alcohol can often lead to family violence, child neglect and other associated issues
- Access to culturally appropriate services is an important tool for early diagnosis and prevention of diseases
- Physical environment in which people live including issues associated with overcrowding is a key contributor to poor health
- Other aspects of social disadvantage such as lack of economic stability such as having few assets, poor education standards, marginalization from mainstream are key contributors to poor health

Evidence and anecdotal feedback relating to Aboriginal people in Roebourne suggests that each of the factors highlighted above is applicable for most families.

**The key health concerns in Roebourne as identified by the Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service (MAHS) include:**

- Diabetes and Chronic Diseases
- Maternal and Child Health
- Alcohol Abuse
- Smoking
- Adolescent Health and Preventative Behaviours
- Acute Trauma after Alcohol

### **Family Planning WA (FPWA):**

FPWA Sexual Health Services are currently delivering their Pilbara Project in Roebourne which aims to enhance the delivery of sexual health services in various communities throughout the Pilbara. Presently, a sexual health audit is being conducted with information in relation to current activity, gap analysis and needs assessment of the community being sought and collated from services providers such as MAHS, YFSI, Health and Education. These service providers are willing participants of the project and are supportive of the initiative which intends to assist in

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<sup>5</sup> Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report 2005

creating local, culturally appropriate resources, and use local agencies to address Roebourne's sexual health needs by targeting all ages.

**Health related services in Roebourne include:**

- a. Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service (MAHS): MAHS was established in 1982 as a community identified response to growing community health and other social issues. MAHS is the largest medical facility in Roebourne and provides holistic care through both clinical and population based health services. It has 26 full-time staff with varying occupations from health workers, nurses to general practitioners. From January 2006 to January 2007 approximately 132 patients on average used the MAHS per week. Services and programs provided through the MAHS include alcohol nutrition, health promotion, and a drug and alcohol program with PADAP.
- b. WA Country Health Service: WACHS operates the Roebourne hospital and a community health nursing clinic on a daily basis; with occasional visiting services (from Karratha) including speech pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy; mental health worker, social worker and sexual assault worker; and, the child health and school health...including early intervention and education through the "Kids Pit Stop" program
- c. Home & Community Care (HACC): YFSI provide a HACC service for frail, aged and disabled. This includes services such as meals on wheels, domestic assistance along with referrals and some travel assistance to appointments.
- d. Pilbara & Kimberley Care Inc: PKC provide services to clients identified as "low level" but requiring support higher than provided by HACC. Services include domestic assistance, meals, personal care and social supports. Further details on the website:

Community feedback to the DIA regional manager has identified that there are concerns regarding the many 'doors' to access health and health related services, and that community would see benefit in exploring the option of a 'one-stop-shop' for accessing health services in Roebourne.

**Strategies in Development, or for Consideration:**

- a. One-stop-Shop: Continue the discussion and explore the option of developing a partnership between the Mawarnkarra Aboriginal Health Service and the WA Country Health Service for a 'one-stop-shop' for accessing primary health services in Roebourne as a service delivery operated through the MAHS, including hospital beds. Community has identified that there are concerns regarding the many 'doors' to access health services, and early discussion has shown support for such an initiative between WACHS and MAHS. An idea put forward by Health for further discussion is a 4-bed "hospital type ward" attached to the MAHS
  - b. Aged Care Accommodation: Progress discussion between WACHS and YFSI to determine the benefits of accessing under-utilised WACHS facilities as a possible solution to provide increased accommodation and care for the aged and frail. (EG Existing older hospital building, or other facilities)
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## **7. EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING:**

Despite the fact that there remains rampant poverty among Aboriginal people in Roebourne today, many Aboriginal people, community groups, government and Industry are attempting to make poverty a part of the past. Recent agreements between community, Industry and governments; and, the cultural renewal work undertaken by many Aboriginal non-government organisations, is assisting people in Roebourne today to improve their lives while also embracing traditional values.

### **Current agreements and initiatives include:**

- a. Ashburton / Roebourne regional partnership agreement (RPA) on employment: RPA was signed in 2007 whereby governments, Industry and community aim to reduce the local Aboriginal unemployment rate by 50% over five years through addressing barriers to employment. Note: This RPA has been difficult to implement due to various factors including poor communication and engagement, and too large a footprint with several major Industry and local government authorities etc. The DIA and the Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) provide secretariat support to the Pilbara RPA's. Current negotiations between Government and Industry is expected to see the placement of an Industry funded RPA coordinator in Roebourne to progress RPA projects.
- b. Minurmarghali Mia (Roebourne TAFE): The campus provides a significant range of programs for the Roebourne community. These include pre-employment training program with major Pilbara companies; dedicated traineeship programs; literacy support programs; school based programs; VET in schools programs for Roebourne High Schools Annexe & Australian Technical College (ATC); community based programs including Capacity Building programs for remote communities, Roebourne Regional Prison programs to address recidivism, Cultural Maintenance/Support programs; along with mainstream programs for individual Indigenous students.
- c. Industry activity in Roebourne includes:
  - Woodside: Woodside is committed to working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities in a spirit of trust and respect to build sustainable outcomes. Woodside opened an office in Roebourne in 2008 to build closer links and to provide a platform for supporting and/or facilitating local programs: Some examples are:
    - Warrgamugardi Yirdiyabura (Pathways to Employment Program )
    - Roebourne Pathways Program (High School Program)
    - Mirnuwarnigu Yirdiya (Learning Road) operator traineeship
    - Clontarf Foundation Roebourne Academy
    - Gumala Mirnuwarni - Coming Together to Learn
    - Supporting Roebourne Art Initiative program
    - Working with Mingullatharndo to help establish viable businessesHost employers include a range of local Aboriginal community organisations and service providers. Further information on these programs can be found on: [www.woodside.com.au](http://www.woodside.com.au) (Working with Woodside > Indigenous Employment > Capacity Building)
  - Rio Tinto (Pilbara Iron): In 1992, Pilbara Iron established the Aboriginal Training and Liaison unit (ATAL). ATAL unit manages training, employment and community relations programs designed to support self-determination and community capacity building within Aboriginal communities in the

Pilbara. ATAL runs education programs, pre-employment training programs and scholarship and cadetship programs in Karratha / Roebourne. The programs increase the pool of candidates for Pilbara Iron positions and also increase the broader skill base. Developed in consultation with Aboriginal people, the ATAL's programs focus on five key areas:

- Job skills training
- Small business development
- Education (Rio Tinto has continued its support for Aboriginal education by extending a partnership for school retention programmes with The Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation)
- Cross-cultural development
- Preservation of Aboriginal culture and heritage

Further information can be found on [www.riotintoironore.com](http://www.riotintoironore.com) (Communities > Community Investment > Indigenous Relations)

d. Organisations and business in Roebourne providing varying levels of assistance and support to people seeking training and employment (including as part of the Ashburton / Roebourne RPA) include:

- Marnda Mia: Established in 2007, Marnda Mia is a company based in Roebourne owned by, and representing several traditional owner groups who are engaged in negotiations with Industry. The aspirations of Marnda Mia are to be a regional voice for groups, and create opportunities for its owners and clients. Employment and training are of particular interest and Marnda Mia has recently been awarded a Job Network contract to assist people into training and employment in the Pilbara region. Marnda Mia has an economic arm and developing a number of proposals.

Further information: [www.marndamia.com.au](http://www.marndamia.com.au)

- Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation (AAC): While the AAC has its main office in Tom Price, the corporation undertakes a number of programs in Roebourne. AAC has been awarded the contract for the Jobs Services Australia (JSA) for the Roebourne area which will commence on 1 July 2009. AAC has a client base of 120 Indigenous job seekers who are being provided with support and training to progress towards employment. The AAC and NBAC are currently negotiating a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for a partnership for 'cropping trials' at DECCA block (prison work camp) and with Cheeditha community as a business venture.
- Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation (NBAC): To help bring about the self support and reliance of its members through the development of economic projects and industry through the CDEP; and to support education, job training and employment of its members. The closure of CDEP (June 2009) has seen the organisation commence the development of a revised strategy, and undertake a business plan for the NBAC. This plan will include support for the satellite communities, along with working closely with their RPA partner AAC in economic development projects.
- Ngarluma Yindibarndi Foundation Ltd (NFYL): To support local employment NFYL are currently considering and progress projects which include commercial laundry, office complex, hydroponic projects and the cultural complex (more details on complex in item 8 below) The NYFI owns the Roebourne General Store.
- Mt Welcome Pastoral Station: A station-hand training program has commenced where candidates undertake a 3-month pre-employment program on the Station

- While the larger not-for-profit, service delivery NGO's of MAHS and YFSI provide a high level of employment, many of the smaller organisations also employ local Aboriginal people

### **Community Development Employment Program (CDEP):**

Commonwealth activity in Roebourne includes CDEP reform changes. CDEP ceases in Roebourne on 30 June 2009. This includes the town of Wickham and the Cheeditha and Mingallutharndo communities. There are approximately 100 CDEP participants in this area. These customers will be transitioned to an employment services provider and on to Centrelink income support payments. Centrelink, DEEWR and FaHCSIA are monitoring this transition closely with support being provided to the CDEP organisation and participants.

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## **8. HERITAGE AND LAND:**

The Aboriginal residents of Roebourne are heirs to an ancient culture in which land, law and culture are inextricably linked. Heritage sites provide a concrete link back through the generations, and the right to protect sites and be properly consulted about them, is key.

### **Native Title Determination: Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi:**

Elders from the Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi peoples originally lodged their native title claim in 1994. They struggled for years to achieve a determination of native title, against State and Federal Governments and some of the world's largest resource companies. The determination of native title was made in 2007 following a 2-year appeal by the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo people. Since their successful claim, both Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi people have established prescribed bodies corporate to hold and manage the native title rights and interests on behalf of the common law holders. For info including map: [www.nativetitle.wa.gov.au](http://www.nativetitle.wa.gov.au) (Pilbara)

**Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) holds title to seven reserves in and around Roebourne.** Negotiations have commenced to transfer titles to the native title holders:

- Cossack 612
- Roebourne 22681
- Cape Lambert 30432
- Pope Nose Bridge 30433
- Yaandina 38901
- Roebourne 31409
- Roebourne 35802

### **Services and programs supporting culture, heritage and land matters:**

- a. Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation (NAC): NAC was established in 2006 and is the prescribed body corporate that holds native title on trust for the Ngarluma people. The NAC office in Roebourne also operates as a resource centre for the Ngarluma people and undertakes cultural activities and programs pertaining to the aspiration of the Ngarluma people. Roebourne is in the heart

- of Ngarluma country. NAC provides a regular newsletter which can be provided by contacting the Roebourne office.
- b. Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC): YAC is the prescribed body corporate that holds native title on trust for the Yindjibarndi people. The Corporation is based in Roebourne within the Juluwarlu offices. YAC represents the Yindjibarndi people's requirements and aspirations in negotiations with mining companies and other developers
  - c. Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation: Juluwarlu's mission is to collect, record, catalogue, archive, preserve, re-produce, exhibit and broadcast the culture and history of the Yindjibarndi peoples as a resource for the Yindjibarndi people, especially the children; to provide the resources to drive and nurture cultural and economic futures; and to share with the broader community. Juluwarlu seeks to provide moral and professional support to the Yindjibarndi people to manage and protect the land, culture and the environment. Further details on Juluwarlu and the YAC: [www.juluwarlu.pilbara.net](http://www.juluwarlu.pilbara.net)
  - d. Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation Limited (NYFL): In 2000, Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi native title groups made an agreement with Woodside Energy and their North West Shelf venture participants under which compensation for land use on the Burrup Peninsula and areas of the Shire of Roebourne was obtained, and formed the NYFL. The objectives of the Foundation are met through being involved in community programs that support the social, cultural, economic, educational, health and wellbeing of the Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi people. The NYFL provides some funding to support and assist with the further development of local art groups. A major project, after extensive community consultation, is the Ngarluma & Yindjibarndi Cultural Centre in Roebourne. A design has been finalised and agreed and this will be a significant cultural feature / facility / enterprise for the Roebourne community. Further information on NYFL, including a 'video' of the Cultural Centre can be viewed at: [www.isx.org.au/projects/1150429857\\_16557.html](http://www.isx.org.au/projects/1150429857_16557.html)
  - e. Marnda Mia: Established to develop a regional approach to issues which affect all the Traditional Owners of the Pilbara. Its role is to work collectively to address disadvantage faced by Aboriginal people in the region. Many Pilbara Traditional Owner groups are negotiating their own agreements with Rio Tinto Iron Ore (RTIO), particularly about things that directly concern them such as financial compensation and issues that affect their claim area.
  - f. Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation: Established in 2005 the corporation manages the benefits that flow from the Burrup and Maitland Industrial Estates Agreement on behalf of the Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi, Yaburara, Mardudhunera and Wong-goo-tt-oo people.
  - g. Roebourne Arts Group (RAG): Roebourne has a thriving arts community. The RAG was established in 2005 and since then many of the artists have exhibited in both Australia and abroad. Affiliated Arts groups include Mirrga Bularda Maya, Bujee-Nhoor-Pu, and Yirramagadu. Further details: [www.roebourneart.com.au](http://www.roebourneart.com.au)
  - h. Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre (WMPALC) provides support across the Pilbara and currently operates in Roebourne through a part-time position based at the NAC. Further details on website: [www.wangkamaya.org.au](http://www.wangkamaya.org.au)
  - i. Information on the ALT, the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee (ACMC) and the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 can be obtained from the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) website: [www.dia.wa.gov.au](http://www.dia.wa.gov.au)

**Strategies in Development, or for Consideration:** (with appropriate community representatives / organisations):

- a. Identify opportunities with TAFE to implement a local training program to support traditional owner group members (and others) knowledge of native title and the Aboriginal Heritage Act, so as to support heritage surveys and site assessment / management, including employing appropriate persons.
- b. Progress transfer of ALT land to traditional owners (including development of economic opportunities)
- c. Explore the funding options that may be provided to Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation Ltd (NYFL) to enable the commencement and supports required to build the Roebourne Cultural Centre and implement the number of programs expected to operate within the building and its surrounds. This is a major initiative. A design has been finalised and this will be a significant cultural facility for Roebourne. Funding is being sought, and this is the only barrier to its development.
- d. In the post native title determination environment, establish if there is the ability to facilitate a review of Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation to create an opportunity for Aboriginal organisations / membership to identify if any changes are required to its structure and representation.
- e. Identify opportunities for NYFL to progress the planned additional ablution facilities at Woodbrook Lore grounds

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## **9. GOVERNANCE AND BEST PRACTICE:**

### **Coordination of Service Delivery:**

Given the multitude of programs, services and service providers active in Roebourne, the need for effective mechanisms to coordinate between agencies is fundamental to efficient and effective service provision. From discussions with Government and non-government agencies a number of impediments to effective coordination at both the regional and localise level are identified. Some of these include:

- A lack of delegation at the regional and district manager level to make decisions and to respond to emerging needs and priorities
- Rigid program and funding guidelines that mitigate against flexible and responsive service delivery
- A lack of discretionary funds with which to respond to local needs
- Individual agencies under pressure to focus on core business at a cost to intersectoral collaboration
- Community politics encourages inertia, as it is impossible to satisfy all sectors
- Increasing number of interagency and community forums consuming the time of senior managers and officers
- A serious impact on all service delivery with the increasingly high turn-over of agency staff resulting in the loss of relativities and understanding of key networks and relationships
- Variable skills and motives of key staff posted to the Pilbara
- Interpersonal and interagency conflicts
- A history of Perth and Canberra failing to support the needs and initiatives of the Pilbara (Note: Implementation in 2007 of the Pilbara Industry Community Council (PICC); the recently announced Pilbara Revitalisation Plan through the

WA State Budget 2009/2010; and, the action of the States AACC to identify Roebourne as a priority has seen a change of focus at the highest level in recent times)

### **Funding of Programs:**

In the "Miles Brief"<sup>6</sup> it stated that "a major problem affecting the implementation of solutions lies in the fact that generic programs aimed at dealing with the issues were deemed unrealistic, for though they are prototyped in Canberra, they hold unrealistic expectations of what is really required at the community level with regards to funding, hours, distances between places and practice. Large amounts of government funding exist in Roebourne. The biggest industry in Roebourne is Human Services. The funding has led to a collage of services depending on what the current dominant view was at the time of funding, or the Government service was made available, and then remains. The services take on a political aspect and are then in competition with other services for resources, people, and status. This leads to conflictual relationships and siloed approaches to work in the community". This is still evident today.

### **Holistic Service Provision:**

In the Miles briefing it also stated that Roebourne is beset with historical social issues, as well as multitude ad-hoc funding, programs and services competing to deliver to a target group of less than 1000 people. The programs and services take a different focus and consider the holistic issue through their own frame of reference. For example:

- Education based responses see poor education outcomes as due to poor child safety, health and other social issues.
- Child well-being responses see poor child well-being outcomes as due to poor education, health and other issues.
- And this similarly occurs in the areas of Economic Opportunity, Alcohol & Other Drugs, Policing, Stolen Generation, Family Violence, Sexual Abuse, Housing Conditions etc.

As such, there is no shared holistic picture and expert based paradigms generally lead to service and response providers trying to determine what needs to happen based on the specific outcomes of their funding or organisation, rather, than based on Indigenous community led changes. Community led changes also have difficulties due to historical & existing conflicts between community leaders.

Feedback from Roebourne Strong Women's Group suggest that all agencies in town should have in their constitution or operational plans / procedures / guidelines not only that they should consult with the community, but should have to provide specific evidence of how they involve the community and build the communities capacity to direct their own services and lives. Agencies need to listen to the community and respond to the community.

### **Plight of Non-Government Organisations (NGO's):**

The Pilbara Association of Non-Government Organisations (PANGO) has stated that the plight of the NGOs in the Pilbara region at this present moment in time is becoming so critical that some services are not being delivered; some services are

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<sup>6</sup> Miles Brief: Department of Community Development (DCD) 2006

struggling to deliver a quality service; and some services are virtually on the brink of actually closing down due to lack of staff.

The affordability of just living in the Pilbara region for NGO workers is such that it is threatening the industry itself, which may lead to the discontinuing of some human services. The NGO sector services a large section of mainly the Indigenous community. PANGO and its membership (which includes a number of Roebourne NGO's) has requested that both the Australian and WA Government place a high priority on the Pilbara NGO industry, which supports the community living in the richest mining-resource region in the Nation, and which is threatened by its own wealth, much of which goes to both Perth and Canberra.

Some of the PANGO priority areas needing to be addressed to ensure NGO sustainability are:

- The availability of housing for NGO's through the Government Regional Officers Housing group (GROH) while moving towards an alternative community housing project
- A review of all funded agencies to ensure those human services required under agreements or contracts have the relevant resources to ensure services are delivered effectively and efficiently to the community as well as within contractual guidelines.

#### **Community Identified Concerns:**

The DIA regional manager has a long association with the Roebourne community (including living in the town), and has made several visits to Roebourne to meet with agencies, groups and individuals in the writing of this report. From these visits and two community-driven meetings held in April 2009, Aboriginal people have made it very clear that:

- a. The aspirations of the community is to be part of solutions and change
- b. The community does not want to be re-consulted on the 'problems and issues' (as identified above in this report) as these are already known by everyone
- c. The community wants government/s and agencies to work with and along-side the community who have ideas and solutions to take Roebourne forward.

Consistent concerns raised, and observations made over a period of time include issues of:

- **Discrimination / Racism:** Feelings of being treated as 'lesser' human beings within many work places, including some Government, have been made to the DIA regional manager. A number of people said that they often feel they are being treated as second class, spoken down to, generally as uneducated people (even though they have significant local and cultural knowledge), and given menial tasks.
- **Personalities and Politics:** This is evident amongst some key organisations in town and this continues to exacerbate an already fragmented environment and is a barrier to community cohesion
- **Lack of clear understanding of role of key agencies in town:** A number of Aboriginal people have expressed that increased and genuine engagement by agencies with the wider Aboriginal population was needed. It was apparent that there is some confusion and a lack of understanding about the role agencies play in the community. Those present expressed a need for a forum to talk with government agencies and other key organisations in town to gain an understanding of the role they play in the community.

**Two actions have resulted from these community discussions.**

- a. A “Meet & Greet” BBQ to be held for Roebourne-based Government personnel, key organisation staff and the Aboriginal community. This would most likely be in The Village area on a quiet day so that people can just mix and chat informally as a way of enhancing relationships and getting to know each other. This would be at some stage in the near future with DIA seeking support from all agencies to participate.
  - b. A Q&A panel evening (heads of government and other key community agencies) would take place and it would need to be formal and well structure, with a trusted facilitator. It would need to be in an environment of two-way respect. The DIA will commence action for such a forum to take place within coming months.
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**Report contact:** For further details, or to discuss this report please contact Helen Shanks, Regional Manager at Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) Pilbara office on (08) 9140 2577 or view a copy on [www.dia.wa.gov.au](http://www.dia.wa.gov.au)