

**SERVICES TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE SHIRE OF WILUNA
MAPPING AND GAP ANALYSIS**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wiluna has many challenges regarding service delivery and coordination that are common to many other remote towns and Indigenous communities in Western Australia. Yet it is unique in terms of its population demographics and its status as a mainstream town, with associated administrative infrastructure, while being situated within a largely Indigenous domain.

In some ways this has contributed to its level of disadvantage. Wiluna has simultaneously been treated as an Indigenous community that is often ignored by mainstream service providers and as a mainstream town, which has received ad hoc access to Indigenous specific programs and funding support. Paradoxically, in areas such as health, this situation has facilitated access to both mainstream and Indigenous specific funding support.

Wiluna's demography shows the stark contrast between the large, relatively well educated and affluent fly in – fly out mining workforce and the extremely disadvantaged local Indigenous population. The Indigenous residents are traditionally highly mobile and maintain strong links to people in the Western desert (Martu) and to traditional laws and culture. There is also considerable diversity within the community with strong links to Goldfields (Wongi) and Mid West (Yamaji).

Although, less than one quarter of the 2001 Census count (which includes the large, transient mining population) identified as Indigenous, Indigenous people represent 75% of the population aged under 18. Indigenous people therefore not only have a long historical association with the area, they also represent the future of Wiluna.

The Indigenous population of Wiluna suffers from chronic homelessness; poor health and wellbeing; a lack of support for the elderly and infirm; neglect of children; poor educational outcomes; alcoholism, violence and poverty. There is a high level of contact with the criminal justice system, a significant dependence on welfare and a failure to develop potential enterprise and labour market opportunities. Interestingly, according to many and as supported by statistics, things used to be a lot worse.

A common denominator to many of the socio-economic problems experienced in Wiluna is the disastrous impact of the use and abuse of alcohol in the community. Fundamental reforms are required to not only manage the negative impacts of alcohol abuse but to turn around the culture of drinking; to control availability and supply; and to ensure that welfare benefits achieve their stated aim of providing a safety-net for those most in need. This report therefore advocates for an expansion of the voluntary money management tools and schemes being trialled in Cape York (such as the Indigenous Financial Management Initiative) as well as an examination of

compulsory income management and sentencing options as has been canvassed in both Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Improved education, training, employment and economic development outcomes are obviously a key to the future development of Wiluna and its Indigenous population. The barriers to this are extensive and long term. They relate to the many social issues described throughout this report and cannot be resolved by the education and training sectors alone. However, there are opportunities for employment and income generation that are not being realised due to the general lack of skills, aptitude and work readiness of the population. There is a need for industry, government and the Indigenous community to work together to promote these opportunities and to tackle the social, cultural and structural impediments that exist.

A major impediment to any social or economic advancement of the Indigenous population in Wiluna is the state of housing available for Wiluna residents. The housing and accommodation situation at Wiluna is typified by overcrowding, homelessness, the substandard and potentially hazardous condition of housing stock and a lack of responsiveness from mainstream service providers. Urgent action is required to repair existing housing and to put in place an effective repair and maintenance system. Action is also required to ensure that Wiluna is able to access mainstream State housing funds commensurate with need.

Wiluna is a divided community. As this report demonstrates, there is a myriad of government funded programs and services delivered to the town, however, the effectiveness of these resources is compromised by a lack of coordination between service providers; community infighting and politics; an over-reliance on community organisations often stretched beyond their capacity; and by a confusing assortment of government administrative boundaries. Wiluna suffers by being alternately classified as part of the Goldfields, the Mid-West or the Central Desert. Depending on the government department, and in some cases which part of the department, it is variously administered from Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Meekatharra, Port Hedland or Perth. A significant challenge for service providers and funding agencies is therefore to improve the current level of communication and coordination and to raise the profile of Wiluna and its needs.

The newly constituted Shire of Wiluna has a vital role to play as a leader, an advocate and as a focus for improved coordination, all of which have been sadly lacking in recent years. A strategic and non-partisan approach is required which facilitates effective working relationships, engages with appropriate representatives of the Indigenous community and does not tolerate the undermining of agreed priorities and objectives.

The Indigenous community also needs to do its bit. In a changing policy environment characterised by statements of mutual obligation and community responsibility, there is an onus on the community to put aside historical differences and power struggles and to seek to engage effectively with government and industry stakeholders. This will require the support of these stakeholders to assist in building this capacity within the community and to put in place the appropriate administrative and supportive structures.

Wiluna also has its strengths. Not the least of which is the good will, commitment and expertise shown by the many government and community people who spend untold hours grappling with all the issues identified in this report and for whom Wiluna is home. This report aims to be a catalyst for change and a tool to assist these people to tackle these issues in a strategic manner and with increased support from government and non government organisations.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

Primary Health Care and Provision of Medical Services

1. NAMS and the Wiluna School give priority to reconstituting regular health screening and health promotional work at the school.
2. Ongoing support is provided to the Central Desert Regional Aboriginal Health Planning Forum and that agencies consider the implications of this model for future service planning and delivery.
3. NAMS review the adequacy of current services provided to outlying communities and ensure that all residents have equal access to the services and facilities provided by the clinic.

Health Promotion and Nutrition

4. A concerted health and nutrition promotion program be implemented at Wiluna to complement the individual approach adopted by NAMS and that this be supported by the DOH, the Shire and relevant business interests.
5. Community housing and facilities be reviewed to ensure that the basic facilities and skills are available and maintained in order to promote healthy living practices including the availability of quality drinking water.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

6. The Wiluna Agreement be reviewed with the involvement of the Office of Drug and Alcohol and the Director of Liquor Licensing, either at a formal or informal level, in order to strengthen its operation and to establish a formal review and evaluation framework.
7. The responsible consumption of alcohol be included in the health promotion approach advocated above. This approach should investigate the development of a code of conduct for drinking that is endorsed by Wiluna elders, which seeks to promote improved social standards and which limits the anti-social consequences of drinking.
8. A priority be given to the development of training and employment activities as well as community events and activities in order to provide alternative activities for those with substance abuse problems.
9. Increased support and training be provided to the Substance Misuse Counsellor in order to ensure that he is adequately equipped to deal with the myriad of often urgent issues that emerge in his role.

10. A concerted effort be made to remove the discarded car bodies from Wiluna and surrounds in order to both improve community amenity and to reduce access for petrol sniffing.
11. Alternatives to lump sum payments of CDEP, Centrelink and other forms of income be investigated for those individuals and families with a history of alcohol and drug abuse and of failing to care for their families.
12. Prior to the next lump-sum family payment due in 2004/05, Centrelink encourage communities to organise community events and transport for shopping expeditions to regional centres in order to promote the purchase of bulk food, clothes and household goods.
13. Voluntary and compulsory management of income be considered for individuals and families with a history of substance abuse and neglect of responsibilities. In this context the initiatives emerging from the Cape York Peninsula Substance Abuse Strategy and the Northern Territory Alcohol Framework should be examined for their applicability in Western Australia.
14. Wiluna be considered for the expansion of the Indigenous Financial Management Initiative and that this be supported by the State and Commonwealth Governments.

Mental Health

15. That relevant agencies review the resources currently available for mental health services to Wiluna with a view to enhancing current service levels. In recognition of current fiscal constraints and the across portfolio nature of the issue, it is also recommended that agencies such as DOH, DCD, FACS, DOET and the Shire discuss options for the joint resourcing of a community development and prevention approach to mental health problems among Aboriginal youth.

Family and Social Support

16. Agencies involved in the area of child abuse and neglect including DCD, DOH/NAMS, WAPS, DOJ and FACS develop a protocol which clearly outlines the respective roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and establishes a set of cooperative and unambiguous procedures to deal with allegations.
17. DSC review the adequacy of current services for people with disabilities with a view to improving coverage of Wiluna and Meekatharra.
18. Relevant stakeholders including DHW, FACS and NAMS revive the aged care facility proposal with a view to overcoming current impediments to progress.
19. Opportunities be explored to improve access to banking services and to develop appropriate financial education and support mechanisms. This could be pursued as part of the new Telecentre by the Shire and the DLGRD.

20. The Shire to work with the Department of Sport and Recreation, DCD and other stakeholders to develop facilities and activities for Aboriginal youth. Consideration should be given to a youth drop in centre either using an existing or purpose-built building.
21. DCD consider supporting the Shire through the Helping Young People Engage Program (HYPE) and consider the establishment of a Youth Advisory Committee.
22. As part of planning for the new family centre, consideration be given to establishment of a women's and children's refuge.

Housing and Tenancy Support

23. DHW acknowledge the current unsatisfactory arrangements for the provision of public housing in Wiluna and act urgently to ensure that:
 - Immediate housing repair needs are assessed and fixed.
 - An effective and responsive housing management and repair and maintenance system is put in place on an ongoing basis.
 - The role of MSP is reviewed and that sufficient resources and support are provided to Maruwayura to fulfil its role.
 - A thorough review of housing and accommodation need is undertaken incorporating existing DHW tenants, those living in improvised dwellings around town and those living or wishing to live in discrete communities outside of town.
 - This review is supported by the prioritisation of Wiluna for urgent additional housing.
 - Those eligible for DHW housing are registered on the waiting list and access mainstream housing funds.
24. The current initiative to provide "homemaker" skills is supported and that DHW, NAMS and Maruwayura explore options to increase the level of support available.
25. The Aboriginal Tenant Support Scheme and the Supported Housing Assistance Program be implemented at Wiluna to provide increased support to tenants and families occupying DHW rental properties.
26. Government agencies and service providers assess current and future GEHA requirements and liaise with DHW to ensure adequate accommodation for employees.
27. GEHA consider reviewing its policies regarding housing for non-government workers in cases of extreme remoteness and where government services are effectively outsourced to community organisations.

Essential Services and Environmental Health

28. Priority is given to expediting the decommissioning of the existing sewerage system and the construction of the new system. If necessary, options should be explored to reduce the most immediate environmental health risks in the interim period.
29. The Water Corporation give priority to addressing the high nitrate levels in the drinking water and that the advice of health authorities be sought on the need for interim measures such as the provision of bottled water.
30. The Water Corporation assess the effectiveness of the insulation in reducing water temperature and ensure that appropriate mechanisms are put in place to address this issue in the long term.
31. DOH, the Shire of Wiluna and NAMS review the adequacy of current environmental health services and the use of current resources with a view to ensuring adequate service levels, complementarity of programs and the best use of any new available funding.

Transport Issues

32. The importance of sealing the Wiluna to Meekatharra road for current service access and for the future development of Wiluna be recognised and that this work be programmed as soon as possible.
33. The maintenance of the Bondini roads be resolved in two stages involving firstly, the negotiation of a service agreement between the community and the Shire and secondly, through the vesting of the road as a Shire road.
34. DPI, in conjunction with the Shire of Wiluna, review the adequacy of public transport in Wiluna and develop a strategy to improve the availability of transport to those in need.

Community Facilities and Amenity

35. The Shire of Wiluna in consultation with the Wiluna community review the adequacy of current community facilities, including those raised in this report and give a high priority to addressing these issues.
36. The Wiluna Shire, DHW and the Mid-West Development Commission explore joint venture and other options for the establishment of a permanent visitors accommodation facility.
37. The Wiluna Shire initiate a community greening and clean up program and that this is supported by CDEP.
38. Funding bodies and other service agencies give a high priority to the proposed swimming pool complex for its proven health, educational and social benefits.

39. The Telecentre be recognised as a significant asset to the Wiluna community and that agencies cooperate to maximise its potential.
40. The future development of Bondini is planned in conjunction with the Shire of Wiluna to ensure a coordinated and efficient approach to the provision of services and facilities.

Justice, Safety and Security

41. The proposed Aboriginal Justice Plan incorporate the recommendations from this report and progress the development of equitable justice outcomes in Wiluna.
42. DOJ and the OCP work together to ensure that the complementary aims of the Aboriginal Justice Plan and the proposed Community Safety and Crime Prevention plans are reflected in a close working relationship that ensures the most effective use of resources.
43. The Shire of Wiluna consider partnering with the Office of Crime Prevention to develop and implement a community safety and crime prevention plan for Wiluna. This plan should complement the Aboriginal Justice Plan and focus on Aboriginal people as victims of crime and not just as perpetrators. Initiatives to minimise the harm caused by alcohol in the community should be given a priority.
44. The WAPS expand its community policing approach and consider supporting community initiatives such as blue light discos, a Police & Citizens Youth Club and increased levels of engagement with key community stakeholders to address issues of truancy, crime prevention and the appropriate utilisation of community facilities.
45. The Department of Justice and the WAPS review the options available for local supervision of community-based orders in order to ensure appropriate supervision and to maximise the number of local offenders serving their sentences in Wiluna.
46. DOJ and DCD liaise to ensure that a suitable facility is acquired for the effective case management of offenders.
47. Priority be given to the provision of a video link to the Carnarvon Court in order to expedite the hearing of charges by the Magistrate and to promote equitable justice outcomes.

Education and Training

48. The Wiluna Remote Community School adopt an increased community focused approach to education that promotes the importance of education in the community and encourages the involvement of parents and community leaders in school activities.

49. Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers be provided with additional training and support in order to implement the internal school suspension system.
50. A closer working relationship be established between the school (with the support of DOET) and other service providers to ensure complementarity of programs addressing early education, parenting skills and social support.
51. The ASSPA committee receive adequate support and skills development to ensure that it can fulfil the functions envisaged in the Aboriginal Education Strategy and play a major role in raising the profile of the school and the importance of education in the community.
52. DOET examine current reports of large numbers of school truants and work with other agencies in Wiluna to ensure that all children of school age in Wiluna are enrolled in and attending school.
53. Reciprocal models such as the Gumala Mirnuwarni program in the Pilbara region of WA be examined with a view to adopting similar practices and principles in Wiluna.
54. The Wiluna Remote Community School be moved from its present location opposite the Wiluna Hotel and that it be located in proximity to the proposed new swimming pool and recreation complex. If necessary, private sector support should be sought to assist in meeting these costs.
55. A “no school no pool” policy be implemented in Wiluna, once the new pool complex is operational, as part of efforts to combat truancy.
56. The adequacy of current mental health support to students suffering emotional and social trauma be reviewed with a view to supplementing existing programs and services.
57. The importance of early childhood development and effective family support for education outcomes in later life be acknowledged and that a close working relationship be established between agencies funding the Parenting and Early Childhood Development Project and the Wiluna School.
58. Vocational education and training opportunities be extended prior to Year 10 in order to expose more Indigenous students to these opportunities and experiences.
59. The education, training, employment and economic development sectors cooperate to develop a comprehensive strategy that ensures an effective pathway from education to employment and wealth creation through improved education outcomes, relevant training, skills development and social supports.

Employment and Economic Development

60. DEWR review the role and functions of CDEP in Wiluna with a view to rationalising its administration and ensuring that participants undertake meaningful and targeted work that addresses community needs and integrates with long-term training and employment strategies.
61. Government, industry and community stakeholders cooperate to develop a locally driven Indigenous Employment and Economic Development Strategy for Wiluna. This strategy needs to:
- Improve education, job related skills and employability amongst Indigenous people;
 - Expand opportunities for employment and training in and around Wiluna;
 - Capitalise on emerging Indigenous economic development and enterprise opportunities; and
 - Seek to overcome current community and industry based impediments to effective employment outcomes.
62. A partnership should be established including representatives of local Indigenous organisations, the ICC, the Shire, DOET, DEWR, OAED, MWDC and industry to coordinate the development of this strategy with input as required from the Indigenous Business Chamber of Australia; the Indigenous Mining and Enterprise Taskforce and other groups such as Burnna Yurral Aboriginal Corporation.
63. Resource companies operating in the Wiluna area set specific Indigenous employment targets and performance measures as part of their local employment policies and actively support the development of local Indigenous enterprises through positive procurement and contractual arrangements.
64. The Shire consider locating a position within its administration with responsibility for working with Indigenous people to identify employment and economic development opportunities and to develop specific projects. This position could be jointly funded by the partners identified above and assist in the development and implementation of the proposed employment and economic development strategy.
65. Increased efforts be made to identify and promote the involvement of Indigenous individuals and organisations (from within and outside Wiluna) as role models and mentors in developing youth skills and work ethics.
66. All mining personnel working in remote areas with significant Indigenous populations be required to undertake appropriate cross cultural awareness training.

Land, Heritage and Culture

67. The strength of Indigenous culture, heritage and connection to land be recognised as significant asset to the Wiluna community and a basis for future socio-economic advancement.
68. The Wiluna Shire develop an Indigenous Arts and Culture Policy in conjunction with relevant agencies, Indigenous organisations and representatives in Wiluna.
69. That all government and non-government employees seeking to engage and work directly with Indigenous people and organisations in Wiluna undergo appropriate cross-cultural awareness training.
70. The Indigenous history of the Wiluna area be documented and promoted as part of efforts to improve community understanding and racial tolerance.
71. The Wiluna Club Hotel and other relevant businesses, support these initiatives by promoting positive images of Indigenous history and positive Indigenous role models.
72. DLGRD work with DIA and Desert Knowledge in conjunction with other forums and partnerships to research ways to develop social, cultural and economic capital in Wiluna.

Coordination of Service Delivery

73. In recognition of the key role required of the Shire of Wiluna and of the past history of disruption, that the Western Australian Local Government Association and the Department of Local Government and Regional Development provide intensive support and training to enable to Shire to fulfil its role.
74. That DLGRD continue to work with the Wiluna Shire to increase community awareness about the importance and functions of local government.
75. A peak government coordinating Forum be established in Wiluna with representation from key government service agencies. This should be convened by the Shire of Wiluna and be supported by the Department of Indigenous Affairs.
76. Relevant State Government Regional Managers and Federal Government agency representatives attend this Forum in its initial stages, and then on a needs basis.
77. Non-government service providers and community representatives be invited to attend this Forum on a regular basis as determined and agreed by the forum.

78. The Wiluna Coordinating Forum take responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the recommendations endorsed from this report with support from the Shire and DIA.
79. Priority is given by this Forum to efforts to rationalise the current confusing array of administrative boundaries and service centres and to improving communication and coordination between stakeholders in Wiluna in order to provide a united and consistent voice to government.
80. A series of public forums be held in Wiluna to enable various agencies to provide information on their roles and responsibilities and to more actively engage key agencies in Wiluna issues.
81. The Wiluna Coordinating Forum establish a clear reporting relationship with relevant Regional Manager Coordinating Committees - in particular with the Mid-West Region.
82. Other committees that may be established around specific functional areas such as the Alcohol Accord, Community Safety and Crime Prevention, School Truancy or domestic violence, should be auspiced by this peak-coordinating Forum in order to rationalise such committees and to coordinate future meetings.

Engagement with the Indigenous Community

83. The Shire of Wiluna, with support from DIA and other agencies, establish an Indigenous Advisory Committee with representation from family groups in Wiluna.
84. DIA, with support from DCD, undertake a family mapping exercise to support the establishment of this Committee.
85. Appropriate protocols be established to support the operation of this Committee and to guide effective community consultation.
86. That corporate governance, leadership and conflict resolution skills training be made available to the Committee and to all Indigenous incorporated groups in Wiluna.