**Pilbara District Leadership Group**

**Collectively addressing local issues**

In the second half of 2019 the Pilbara District Leadership Group (DLG) supported the Department of Communities on behalf of the DLG undertaking consultation with DLG members and other relevant stakeholders to identify the key social issues and their causes in Newman, and identify existing/proposed initiatives that are or can address the underlying causes and where new initiatives are identified, outlining the next steps for these to be progressed.

The consultation identified a range of social issues related to unoccupied dwellings and related concerns such as properties being vandalised and anti-social behaviour from time to time by groups of children and adolescents.

The key causal factors identified during consultation included:

* colonisation and subsequent intergenerational trauma;
* the availability and misuse of alcohol (and other drugs);
* a lack of suitable housing and employment in Western Desert communities and overcrowding of in households in Newman, especially in the summer;
* limited availability of services in Western Desert communities compelling people to travel to Newman;
* lack of transport to Western Desert communities resulting in residents remaining in Newman longer than they would like;
* the limited availability of treatment and alternate accommodation for perpetrators of family and domestic violence; and
* convergence of differing cultural and economic perspectives.

Each of these factors was complex, however, three initiatives emerged as priority areas from the consultation which have the potential to make a positive difference across a number of these causal factors. These initiatives were as follows:

* a transport service for supporting people to access services in Newman and return to Western Desert remote communities;
* examine whether further transactional services could be offered on an outreach basis; and
* renewed investment in refurbishing and building new housing in the Western Desert communities (i.e. Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji).

The Pilbara DLG agreed to:

* Support development of a transport service to assist Western Desert community members travelling between these communities and Newman to access services by a group coordinated by the Department of Communities and comprised of Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ), Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation (WDLAC), Creating Communities (on behalf of BHP), Department of Transport, WACOSS and any other nominated organisations, with the strategy to include a proposed operating and governance model, costings and sustainable funding arrangement.
* Support the Department of Communities convening a group comprised of Centrelink, Department of Transport, KJ, WDLAC, WACOSS, WAPHA and any other interested permanent or occasional DLG members to identify the existing transactional services delivered by outreach to Western Desert remote communities and explore opportunities to expand transactional services delivered by outreach and/or the coordination of these outreach services.
* Support the DLG to engage with the Department of Communities to highlight the priority and benefit of reinvestment in housing in Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji  and welcome the opportunity to work with the Department in the development of the remote communities strategy and related budget proposal.

Two pilot projects were subsequently developed – Getting Back Home and Staying Home – and with financial support from BHP have been progressed.

**Getting Back Home Strategy** focused on the absence of public transport options to and from Western Desert Communities resulting in:

* Missed medical appointments
* Missed court appearances
* Missed other appointments with State Government agencies
* Unlawful trips - driving unlawfully without a licence or travelling in unlicensed vehicles in order to attend essential services
* People becoming stuck in town without accommodation and unable to return

**The Staying Home Strategy** aimed to address the lack of access to essential transactions and an urgent need for redesign of service provision in the Western Desert Communities often resulting in:

* Missed medical appointments
* Missed court appearances
* General impacts to employment, livelihoods, education/training and wellbeing

The key contributors in these initiatives were:

* **Newman Reference Group** (KJ, PAMS, Newman Women's Centre, Department of Communities , SoEP, WA Police, BHP)
* **Newman Futures Culture and Country Working Group** (WDLAC, KJ, Martu Leadership Team, PAMS, Newman Women's Centre, SoEP, BHP, WA Police, Department of Communities)
* **Department of Communities consultations** with a wide range of local agencies in late 2019
* **Martu Leadership Team** consultations conducted by KJ
* Department of Communities **Remote Western Desert Communities Transactions and Transport design workshop** facilitated by Creating Communities February 2020 (PAMS, Newman Women's Centre, SoEP, KJ, Martu Leadership Team, Department of Transport)

This collaboration is an example of organisations across government and non-government sectors partnering in the locality to address local issues, provide opportunities and deliver improved outcomes for the community.