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## Really proper dangerous one: Aboriginal responses to the first wave of COVID-19 in the Kimberley

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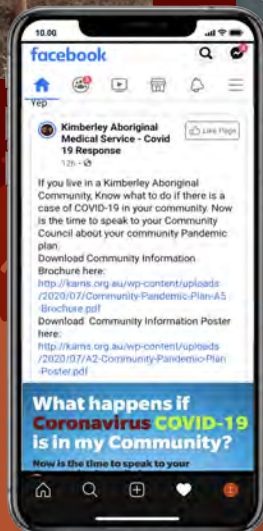
# Really proper dangerous one:

## Aboriginal responses to the first wave of COVID-19 in the Kimberley



Saturday 14th March

**THERE ARE NO  
CONFIRMED CASES  
OF COVID-19 IN  
REGIONAL WA**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**NOTRE DAME**  
AUSTRALIA



**Nulungu**  
Research Institute  
The University of Notre Dame Australia



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To the Aboriginal community members who spoke with us on back verandahs, on long drives, over cups of tea and while fishing, we owe enormous gratitude. We sincerely hope that our observations are useful for those planning the response to the next wave of COVID-19, and that those responses are the best possible ones to keep everyone safe and well.

Matt McDonald from Environs Kimberley in Broome assisted with maps, and Dr Francis Markham from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the ANU assisted with accessing ABS data.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the generous financial support the research project received from the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation.



*Unloading the donation from Bunnings, Balgo, 2020.*

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*Front cover images (clockwise): Staff from Jutiya Jungarni Aboriginal Corporation (JJAC), Halls Creek (Credit: JJAC), Ben Ward and son painting at Ngununlun-Cockatoo Springs Community (Credit: Ngulunlun Community), Kevin Oscar on Leopold Downs, Dora Griffiths teaching her grandsons (Credit: Anita Churchill), Amarillo Oscar, Warringarri stock camp, Leopold Downs.*

## Foreword

### **This paper should be required reading for all agencies which are meant to be keeping Aboriginal people as safe as possible from the continuing ravages of COVID-19.**

The authors have delivered an information-packed snapshot of the achievements and shortcomings that were apparent across the Kimberley region of Western Australia during the first wave of COVID. The most notable achievements belong to Aboriginal people themselves; by and large, the shortcomings belong to the Western Australia government and non-government, non-Aboriginal organisations which increasingly have contractual responsibilities in the Aboriginal domain.

The first hurdle that confronted the authors was a dearth of good baseline data, especially for remote communities and outstations, because both the Commonwealth and WA governments abandoned crucial and informative surveys in the first decade of this century. A government that doesn't want to know its own backyard is a government that doesn't care. At the same time as they were winding down data collection, governments were winding back infrastructure commitments. Those policy shifts unfortunately limited the potential of the research behind this paper, but also compromised the WA government's pandemic plans.

Commendably, the researchers have done their best to overcome data deficiencies by talking firsthand to a host of Aboriginal people and organisations across the region. For me, the best reading lies in their place-specific accounts of how Aboriginal people took their own initiatives to stay safe, sometimes in spite of official opposition or indifference. Their ready willingness to return to country had immeasurable cultural benefits.

I loved the story of the woman who removed her family from One Arm Point to an island for their own protection and whose young daughter now keeps asking when they'll return home; or the story from Balgo where old people who held important cultural knowledge were removed to outstations in open defiance of officialdom. Many similar stories of self-reliance and resilience elsewhere in the Kimberley are recounted.

This paper highlights fundamental failures that will continue to limit government's ability to protect Aboriginal people in the Kimberley from future iterations of this persistent pandemic. Levels of poverty, poor health and overcrowded housing, the lack of essential infrastructure, communication failures and inadequate Aboriginal administrative and governance structures (coupled with an unwillingness to empower Aboriginal organisations), are all just as bad now as when COVID first visited. Yet, I see no evidence that the government has been stirred to make the investments in infrastructure and the like that will be necessary to withstand the disaster that will beset Aboriginal people in the Kimberley if the pandemic really takes hold.

The paper confirms my belief that while Aboriginal people across the Kimberley were largely untouched by the first wave of COVID, it was not so much by good government management as by good luck. We cannot continue to rely on good luck, especially as Western Australia prepares to open its borders and as the Omicron variant presents new threats.

I congratulate everyone who has contributed to this important work.

**Patrick Dodson,**  
Labor Senator for Western Australia



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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AC	Aboriginal Corporation
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
AMS	Aboriginal Medical Service
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BBY	Binarri-binyja Yarrawoo
CCP	Community Connectors Program
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHINS	Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
COVID - 19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
DOC	Department of Communities
DLGSC	Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
DPC	Department of the Premier and Cabinet
IRG	Incident Response Group
JJAC	Jungarni Jutiya Aboriginal Corporation
KAMS	Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service
KALACC	Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
KWAC	Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation
KRSP	Kimberley Regional Service Providers
LEMC	Local Emergency Management Committee
LGA	Local Government Area
MG Corp	Miriuwung Gajerrong Corporation
MWW	Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation
NBN	National Broadcasting Network
NBY	Nyamba Buru Yawuru
NGO	Non-government organisation
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NPARIH	National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing
NT	Northern Territory
OAP	One Arm Point
PBC	Prescribed Body Corporate
RACCERF	Remote Aboriginal Communities COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund
RAESP	Remote Area Essential Services Program
RFDS	Royal Flying Doctors Service
TBR	Town-based Reserve
OB	Olabud Doogethu
WA	Western Australia
WACHS	West Australian Country Health Service



## Executive Findings

We know that the effects of a pandemic are as much social, economic and cultural as they are health-related and clinical. Documenting the societal impact in a region such as the Kimberley, and with a focus on Aboriginal people, requires a different kind of lens from a medical one, and needs to account for a socio-economic and political landscape that is radically different from much of Australia.

Our research focus, driven as it was by early conversations and meetings with Aboriginal people across the region in September and October 2020, was to look for, and document, the extent of Aboriginal action, the ways in which Aboriginal families, communities and organisations were able to respond to the first wave of COVID-19, and how these responses were supported by, or hampered by, government interventions.

The findings below do not summarise the research detail; rather they summarise high level policy-relevant insights that the team gained through the process of pulling together the detail contained in the case studies. Some of our insights go beyond the events of 2020, and draw on longer term trends in the region, trends which impacted on the effectiveness of government interventions to the first wave of COVID-19. Others reinforce what Aboriginal people have been saying in the Kimberley since the 1980s about the need for serious and considered investment of time and resources into a regional governance structure to enable proper and respectful articulation between government agencies, and the interests and values of the Aboriginal people of the region.

1. Aboriginal organisations were vital at every level of the pandemic response in the Kimberley, translating and interpreting policy directions that were coming out of Canberra and Perth. The presence of Aboriginal resource agencies and long-standing community organisations meant that there were entities in place with detailed understandings of the dynamics of their local populations, and this made a significant difference *in those places*. However, the varied capacities of these organisations – and a complete absence of such organisations in some sub-regions – contributed to the unevenness of the response across the Kimberley.
2. While Aboriginal organisations were necessary implementers of government directions, there was not a sense of collaboration or partnership beyond the shared goal of limiting the spread of the virus. Local knowledge and leadership networks were called upon but were not empowered at local or regional levels. The extent of the emergency arguably justified a top-down approach from government, however the absence of shared decision making between government agencies and Aboriginal organisations hindered the effectiveness of elements of the governmental response.
3. It was not enough to invite an Aboriginal person to participate in high level daily briefings or to establish a Taskforce of Aboriginal CEOs – although these initiatives were a good start. The political and cultural landscape of Aboriginal people across the Kimberley is a complex one and engaging with that landscape cannot adequately occur via such mechanisms alone. The pandemic has highlighted the need for a well-considered governance structure that supports Aboriginal people to properly engage with a range of interests – government, commercial and so forth. The drip-feed approach to supporting the building of Aboriginal institutions in the region has resulted in an increasingly uneven and balkanised political landscape.
4. The inadequacy of data collected by government relating to numbers of Aboriginal people across the Kimberley, their distribution and characteristics, undermined government's capacity to target areas of high risk quickly, or to put in place plans and contingency plans around where people live, and patterns of mobility. This was compounded both by a neglect of remote community infrastructure, as well as inadequate data as to the state of that infrastructure. Government agencies, and staff, had to invest much time attempting to gather this crucial information, and pushed significant responsibility for this data collection and compilation back onto Aboriginal organisations, and remote community people.

A proper audit of the state of remote and town-based community infrastructure is called for. This needs to be counter-balanced by the ABS 2021 Census data, and a gaps analysis of essential infrastructure across the region should be completed. In our view, the investment governments have failed to make in this space is resulting in costs being transferred to other government sectors: to health, to costs relating to justice and incarceration and to poorer mental and physical wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

5. A 'snap-back' to pre-COVID life, or policy settings, would be a lost opportunity for the state of WA, and for Aboriginal people of the Kimberley. We have seen that high level engagement between governments and Aboriginal people is possible and necessary to improve government's effectiveness.
6. The positive impacts of the increased income for welfare recipients via the COVID supplement were legion. The costs of so many Aboriginal residents living below the poverty line are borne across other government departments: health, education, justice, child protection and so forth.
7. While government officers repeatedly commented on the remarkable levels of collaboration that occurred with Kimberley Aboriginal organisations and leaders during the first wave of COVID-19, these sentiments were not consistently mirrored on the ground. Rather these partnerships were viewed as highly utilitarian, and accorded with a range of objectives set firmly by government agencies – albeit for 'the good of Aboriginal people'. They did not result in any ongoing, high level forms of articulation between government and Aboriginal groups across the region.
8. The Aboriginal community organisation sector in the Kimberley represents a resource that is underutilised and under-resourced. The leadership of these organisations holds decades of knowledge and observations as to what works, and what does not, for their people. In addition it would appear that such organisations are becoming increasingly siloed from each other at local and regional levels.



Happy at Woorre-Woorrem (left to right): Philomena Armstrong, Agnes Armstrong, Quebec Namala  
(Credit: Marilyn Warra)



# Introduction

This report brings together both qualitative and quantitative data sources to describe how Aboriginal people and organisations responded to the threat of COVID-19 across the Kimberley in 2020, how the various government policies and approaches rolled out, and how they were received on the ground.

We write this report as 2021 is coming to a close, at a time when Australia is experiencing an explosion in cases of COVID-19 amongst Aboriginal communities and people, and a number of deaths.<sup>1</sup>

The triumphalism that had characterised the narrative around the Indigenous response to the threat of the virus in mid-2020, by late 2021, has all but dissipated, and been replaced by an acute nervousness. At the time of writing, in November 2021, the Delta variant has upped the ante and spread like wildfire through a number of Indigenous communities, including remote ones in the Northern Territory (NT). At a national level, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander COVID-19 cases have grown from 153 to more than 7,500 since Delta spread into communities in June, with 15 COVID-related deaths amongst those cases.<sup>2</sup>

The authors of this report are not epidemiologists. We are anthropologists and political scientists and community members, researchers with a long-term interest in how Indigenous policies impact on the lives, and cultural practices, of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley. This report reflects on how government measures to control the spread of COVID-19, often conceived of in far-away cities, affected people's daily lives. A crucial preoccupation of the research team was the role of Aboriginal organisations in this process, both in assisting government agencies in policy implementation, and supporting their communities to find ways, and to find places, where they might avoid COVID-19 and they might also sustain themselves and their families.

In writing about Aboriginal organisations, we reference a long and ongoing dialogue that is concerned with the proper role of such entities in remote Australia, and in representing Aboriginal interests, delivering services to Aboriginal clientele, and advocating for Aboriginal involvement in policy settings and decisions which directly impact on Aboriginal lives.

We can attest that Aboriginal organisations across the Kimberley performed vital, though varied, roles in 2020.

At the time of writing the region has remained COVID-free since mid-2020. It is worth making the observation that the Kimberley is also reported to have the lowest vaccination rate of any region in Australia.

So the implications of this report are ever more urgent.

Hindsight is always clearer than foresight, and although this report is largely concerned to examine the events of 2020 with hindsight, it is also self-evident that its contents will provide considerable food for thought to those planning any response to the second wave, or the arrival of the Delta variant in the remote north-west of Western Australia.<sup>3</sup>

We genuinely hope that the value of this project is to reflect on the impacts of all those government measures that were brought in across a range of domains and to consider what worked well, what might have worked better and the reasons why.

It is important to acknowledge that the early days and weeks of COVID-19 saw both the Australian and West Australian governments devise emergency responses enacted into law over very short time periods. This rapid response was made possible via unprecedented levels of political cooperation across party lines, and across and between Australian jurisdictions, which have not been witnessed in living memory – including down to local government levels in some instances. Policy settings that would normally have been assessed for months or years, were being arrived at in a matter of days.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/oct/14/indigenous-people-infected-with-covid-delta-strain-at-twice-the-rate-of-other-australians>: "Up until mid-June 2021, just 153 Indigenous people had contracted the disease, with none dying. But as the Delta variant spread rapidly across New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT, more than 4,500 cases led to 10 Indigenous deaths and 500 people being hospitalised."

<sup>2</sup> Radio National interview with Pat Turner, Nov 190, 2021. (<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/coronacast-aboriginal-health-groups-vaccination-gap/13638438>)

<sup>3</sup> As we were finalising this report in mid-December 2021, the Omicron variant began to spread. We refer briefly to this new variant in a Post-Script at page 73.

It is also important to acknowledge a few caveats concerning this project. In the first half of 2020, most likely every Aboriginal organisation, and every non-Indigenous organisation for that matter, was by and large obsessed with developing policies, settings, applying for funds, adjusting business procedures and advising staff and the general public on matters relating to COVID-19. As a small team of researchers, all engaged part-time, there was no possibility that we could document everything that occurred in the Kimberley, even when we decided to limit ourselves, as we did very early on, to non-medical, non-clinical observations about the impacts of COVID measures.

We also consciously, either because of limitations of time, or limitations of access to data, or because of our own limited areas of expertise, chose to 'leave out' certain potential focus areas of the project. Each of the three listed below could have consumed the entire focus on the research project's time and resources. That we chose not to explore these themes does not diminish their importance; rather we decided that a more useful perspective would be provided by narrowing the areas we would investigate, and delivering a more in-depth study of these matters, rather than casting a wider net. The themes that we chose to set aside from our focus included:

- education and schooling, and the success or otherwise of the remote learning approach in the Kimberley context
- levels of crime and domestic violence across the region, and
- health service capacity and clinical responses

We note however the very crucial role that organisations such as the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (KAMS) and other Aboriginal medical services across the region, as well as environmental health services, played in responding early to the threat posed by COVID-19 in 2020 – in providing essential information and advice to Kimberley Aboriginal people, and in guiding the mainstream health agencies that were leading the pandemic response. We also acknowledge the role played by the WA government health department, the West Australian Country Health Service, in leading the response regionally.<sup>4</sup>

## The Kimberley, COVID-19 and 2020

For the Kimberley, the experience of that first lockdown of 2020 (April – June), the lead up to it and the wind down from it, was a kind of extreme form of social experiment – and for many, a not unpleasant one at that. Large numbers of people moved voluntarily, or were assisted to move, back to traditional homelands, country, outstations, 'blocks', 'holiday camps' and communities. This precise number of people is difficult to estimate, although it was certainly in the thousands. For a region with an Aboriginal population of around 14,500, these were very significant numbers of people.

In addition to the various border closures, including Shires, and how these affected the region, as well as all kinds of public health measures including isolation, hygiene and social distancing, the other major policy impact for the region's Aboriginal population was the increase in income many people experienced via the COVID supplement, and through individuals accessing superannuation. The effects of this increased income were variable across areas and within families, and depended on a number of other interlinked factors, and on other government policies that were introduced simultaneously.

The implications of what we are documenting here go beyond merely suggesting how to manage the second wave of the pandemic, or other kinds of regional crisis, better into the future. Our findings also speak to the neglected state of infrastructure that exists in Kimberley remote communities, and in Kimberley towns. They also demonstrate the continuing commitment that Aboriginal people in this region have to connection to country, and to kin. And they highlight the level of poverty that pre-existed the pandemic. They suggest a need for far more sophisticated and inclusive systems of governance which operate across government, NGO and ACCO lines, at a regional level. And finally, they attest to the extraordinary resourcefulness and resilience of Aboriginal people, families, communities and organisations, who mobilised with enormous collective energy to confront the threat of the virus. Over and over again, the response to the threat of COVID-19 was less a concern for self, or for a household, and more an expansive concern for others: for relatives, for community members, and especially, for Elders or older people.

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<sup>4</sup> WACH was the lead agency in the pandemic response.



To a degree, the remoteness of many Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley facilitated social distancing; extended families were able to stay, together and often on traditional homelands, and this experience was positive for many people. 'Lockdown' then was, for many families, a liberating experience. However, as we will explore in detail below, these experiences were highly variable, and themselves presented a range of risks, and flow-on effects.

For those Aboriginal people in towns however, 'lockdown' was a less positive experience; the social isolation that was enforced in town-based contexts was particularly challenging for people who value contact with extended family very highly.<sup>5</sup>

## Project background

This research project was funded by the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation via the Office of the West Australian Chief Scientist (successful award notified mid-June 2020).

The focus of the research undertaken developed throughout weekly discussions between Nulungu Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff during the first wave of COVID-19 restrictions. An effort initially to ensure the pastoral care of staff, and the anecdotes shared, developed into a broader research interest as the group considered challenges being faced, shared and reported across the community. The funding offer came just as Nulungu was starting to look at funding options. Once established, the research team committed to an expanded project that incorporated collaborative leadership and research design with the broader Kimberley Aboriginal population. Early discussions with key peak Aboriginal organisations and regional organisations included consideration of themes for the research focus, and of ensuring that the research made an impact.

To this end the project has reported to, and been guided by, an Aboriginal Steering Committee with members from the East and West Kimberley. We met with the committee five times over the life of the project and engaged with them individually from time to time over specific matters.

## Project Aims

1. To consider the impacts of COVID-19 responses, as rolled out by local, state and federal governments, on Kimberley Aboriginal people.
2. To document how Aboriginal people, communities and organisations responded to the threat of a pandemic.
3. To document how the COVID-19 restrictions interacted with a range of other factors, and resulted in unexpected positive and negative consequences.
4. To consider lessons learnt from 2020 and how these might inform future policies/strategies for pandemics, as well as what mechanisms or kinds of investment are required to enable such policies to be effective.

## Methodology

The research team used a mixed methods approach to gather various sources of data, both qualitative and quantitative. We interviewed a range of people including:

- Executive/staff/constituents of Aboriginal community organisations
- Aboriginal individuals and families resident in remote communities and/or towns
- Regional directors of government agencies – and some staff – as well as Perth-based staff who were working on the government response in the Kimberley

In total, we conducted 61 interviews, with a number of those in the Fitzroy Valley and on the Dampier Peninsula being conducted by community-based researchers engaged by the project.

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<sup>5</sup> This experience was common to First Nations people across the globe. For example: COVID-19 in the Arctic- "Senior Arctic Officials' executive meeting, Iceland 24-25 June 2020" <https://arctic-council.org/news/covid-19-in-the-arctic-a-briefing-document-for-senior-arctic-officials/>

The Aboriginal organisations that we worked with who had relevant data sets were generous in sharing them with us. While some government agencies were very responsive to our request for data, others were less so.

In line with our intention to conduct deep dives into how COVID-19 measures were affecting people locally, we chose to develop seven case studies. These were based on the availability of the data in that locality, the willingness of relevant Aboriginal organisations to partner and participate in the research, and on the personal connections that members of the research team had with individuals and families in that location. Case studies also emerged around places where research themes were coalescing, and where it was evident that a range of variables coincided to produce interesting insights.

The study was constrained by resources, translating into limitations of staff time. The vastness of the region meant that we could not cover all of the Kimberley. As a result, there are some geographic blind spots in the study – we did not find willing Aboriginal organisational research partners for areas on the Gibb River Road, and on that basis, we did not pursue a case study of the town of Derby, which services most of these remote communities. Similarly, while we conducted extensive interviews with organisations and individuals in Halls Creek, Balgo and Kununurra, we were limited in the time we were able to spend securing commitments from key organisations in Wyndham to participate in the research.

Finally, a challenge of the research, conducted as it has been while the threat of COVID still hovers, has been that by 2021, many Aboriginal people and the wider community have, understandably, become obsessed with the vaccination, and with what the low vaccination rates might mean for the Kimberley.

These low vaccination rates however make the import of this work even greater, as it is likely that community lockdowns and other measures will need to be reintroduced<sup>6</sup> to the region to avoid the rapid spread of COVID-19.

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<sup>6</sup> Note that, legally, remote communities in WA are still 'closed' under the Remote Communities Directive issued in March 2020. However, the movement of people in and out of Kimberley communities, anecdotally at least, has returned to pre-COVID levels. See for example, Parke, E. (2021). Lockdown dilemma looms for remote Kimberley communities after WA's border reopens. ABC Online.



# Background: People, place & 2020

## Aboriginal people, communities and organisations across the Kimberley

In this section, we aim to paint a picture of the socio-political landscape of the Kimberley, and where the Aboriginal population stands within it. We do this to provide a context for the detailed observations below.

The Kimberley region is 423,517 km<sup>2</sup>, or around twice the size of the state of Victoria. The 2020 estimated resident population of the region, based on data from the 2016 Census, was 36,054, with a population density of 0.09 persons per square km.<sup>7</sup> 41.6% of the Kimberley’s total population are Aboriginal people, or 14,998 people.

The region is divided into four Shires: the Shire of Derby-West Kimberley which incorporates the towns of Derby and Fitzroy Crossing; the Shire of Halls Creek which incorporates the town of Halls Creek and communities including Ringers Soak (Kunjat Djaru) and Balgo; the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley, which incorporates the towns of Kununurra and Wyndham, and the Shire of Broome which incorporates the town of Broome, the Dampier Peninsula to Broome’s north and the largest remote community in the state, Bidadanga to Broome’s south (See Figure 4, page 26).

Table 1: Total Estimated Resident Population in Kimberley Local Government Areas (ERP 2019)

Local Government Area - Shire	Estimated total resident population, 2019
Shire of Broome	16,907
Shire of Halls Creek	3,454
Shire of Derby-West Kimberley	8,202
Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley	7,338
<b>Total Estimated Resident Population for the Kimberley, 2019</b>	<b>35,901</b>

Source: Regional Development Australia Kimberley (<https://profile.id.com.au/rda-kimberley/population?WebID=130>)

While significant numbers of Aboriginal people reside in towns across the region, we calculated, based on ABS Census data from 2016, that approximately 50% of this population do not live in a town.<sup>8</sup> They live in a community. This number is possibly significantly higher than the 7146 we calculated, given that we know that the ABS Census undercounts Aboriginal people in the Kimberley.<sup>9</sup> (Taylor 2020: 16,18,21). Taylor also makes the observation that the populations of smaller communities are increasingly invisible, and subsumed under larger geographic areas by the census.<sup>10</sup>

The actual number of remote communities in the region is a moot point, and depends on how a community is defined. The current West Australian (WA) government has continued a policy of withdrawing essential services support from smaller remote communities, and encouraging the movement of people back into larger communities and towns. The withdrawal of Commonwealth funding from the National Partnership on remote housing (NPARIH) is often referenced in this debate, although it is clear that the WA government was developing criteria to select out remote communities deemed ‘unsustainable’ as early as 2010.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/rda-kimberley?WebID=110>

<sup>8</sup> This was calculated by subtracting the Indigenous population of towns from the Shire total Indigenous populations. All data derived from the 2016 ABS census.

<sup>9</sup> ABS does adjust figures to account for undercount after each Census to arrive at an Estimated Resident Population.

<sup>10</sup> “In 2001, a total of 69 discrete Aboriginal communities were reported across the East Kimberley by the ABS’ Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) but only 7 of these are identified by the 2016 census geography. The ability to report on population change in the majority of individual locations is thus highly constrained. While the Indigenous Location geography represents the lowest unit within the census classification that is specifically intended to identify Aboriginal communities, many of these remain statistically invisible as they are subsumed under large area geographies.” (Taylor 2020: 21)

<sup>11</sup> See for example <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-28/wa-premier-colin-barnett-remains-staunch-on-remote-communities/6352678>; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-24/federal-review-reveals-192-communities-deemed-unsustainable/6343570>

The previous WA Premier Colin Barnett's policy announcement in 2015 to 'Close Remote Aboriginal Communities' – specifically between 100-150 of 274 remote WA communities – met with outrage, both from within Australia and overseas.<sup>12</sup> However, this process of rationalisation, that is, of gradually withdrawing services from smaller communities and designating them 'self-managed', has continued to be the unstated policy position under Labor's Mark McGowan, who defeated the Barnett government in 2017, implemented via the 'Remote Services Reform Unit' within the Department of Communities.

The basis for withdrawing services from 100+ communities was that they were deemed to have less than 10 residents, or to be only seasonally occupied. It is difficult to ascertain which communities continue to receive essential and municipal services, and which have drifted into the category of being 'self-managed'. A 2021 WA Auditor-General's report which assessed the Department of Communities delivery of essential services to remote Aboriginal communities listed 136 communities across the state, precisely 100 of which were in the Kimberley – and 58 of these designated as 'Self-Managed' (See Figure 2, p 22.).

Despite the Aboriginal population often being targeted with blunt policy measures, it is arguably a very heterogeneous population. Around half the Aboriginal population of the Kimberley live in towns. Socio-economically, there is great variation as to people's employment, family size, education level, English-language proficiency and so forth.

The cultural landscape of the Kimberley is also heterogeneous, and is overlaid by Native Title, which covers around 95% of the region through dozens of Native Title determinations. There are more than 30 Kimberley language groups across five generally agreed upon "cultural blocs":

- Northern Tradition – Wyndham, Kalumburu and the Gibb River Road
- Eastern Tradition – Halls Creek, Warmun and Kununurra
- Central Tradition – Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and surrounds
- Western Tradition – the Dampier Peninsula
- Southern Tradition – from Broome and Bidyadanga across to the Tjurabalan (around Balgo) (KALACC 2020)

### Population mobility

In the context of the larger discussion here, the issue of population mobility is an important one to consider. The mobility patterns of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley have not been well studied, although a few crucial studies – demographic and anthropological (Prout 2008) – have attempted to describe, and to categorise, patterns of mobility within the Kimberley or within sub-regions such as the Fitzroy Valley.<sup>13</sup> One relevant study was Morphy (2010) which, as part of a detailed survey of the population of the Fitzroy Valley, attempted to categorise the population according to mobility levels, via three levels: a stable core of people who mostly live in one community, a 'mobile core' who count more than one place as a home, and a kind of peripheral group of people who visit from time to time.

The reasons for mobility vary, and Morphy identifies a range of motivations, including access to services, work-related mobility and seasonal mobility where people leave certain communities during the wet season because of accessibility issues. But the crucial driver is the maintenance of kinship networks which, as Morphy observes, is not random but is often contingent on other events: funerals, ceremonies, opportunities for travel and visiting as they arise, and seasonal factors. She documented significant movements of people back into larger communities, and into town-based reserves, during the wet season.

She also observed that the most mobile people in the Fitzroy Valley were those aged in their late teens and early twenties. (Morphy 2010: 58)

Acknowledging that the Aboriginal population of the Kimberley is generally mobile, and that particular locations, and cohorts of people, are even more mobile, is important in the context of planning for, and attempting to contain, a pandemic.<sup>14</sup> Mobility is also important in the context of considering population data for towns and communities across the region, because the Census counts only the people resident in that place on that day; it gives no indication of service populations and how a service population fluctuates over time, and according to kin networks and other social dynamics.

<sup>12</sup> See for example <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/may/01/thousands-join-protests-against-wa-indigenous-community-closures>

<sup>13</sup> The Fitzroy Valley refers to the town of Fitzroy Crossing and some 35 communities which are serviced by the town. See also the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mobility in Central Australia Survey. <https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2021/11/BCEC-CRC-REP-Report-Vol-1-final.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> See Small, M., et al. (2020). "Modelling remote epidemic transmission in Western Australia and implications for pandemic response." arXiv preprint arXiv:2007.07445. "Despite extreme isolation, we show that the movement of people amongst a large number of small but isolated communities has the effect of causing transmission to spread quickly. Significant movement between remote communities, and regional and urban centres allows for infection to quickly spread to and then among these remote communities."



The other impetus for mobility which is crucial in this context is to purchase food and other goods, and for some, alcohol. These patterns, of where particular communities and towns go to for 'shopping', have not been well documented or researched in the Kimberley. However, along with people's mobility patterns which relate to kin networks, these forms of circular mobility for shopping and service access are well understood by Aboriginal people. Whether this knowledge was sufficiently sought, and then accounted for, in pandemic planning processes undertaken in 2020 across the region is highly questionable.

We can report however that in our interviews with Aboriginal people across the region, mobility slowed significantly for many, and the vast majority only recounted travelling for provisioning purposes. Many people expressed sadness or frustration at their inability to visit family elsewhere, but they nonetheless, with a few exceptions, abided by the travel restrictions and, when the Shire borders were closed, stayed within them. In any case, as we elaborate more (at pages 47-48), the extent of car ownership by Aboriginal people in the region itself acts to severely delimit people's mobility.

## Aboriginal organisations

The socio-cultural landscape described briefly above is reflected in a diversity of Aboriginal community organisations across service delivery, advocacy, legal services, health, economic development, native title rights and interests, and other domains. While there has been a decline in the number of active Kimberley Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), and an increase in non-Indigenous NGOs, especially in the competitive service delivery space, many Aboriginal entities remain, and retain loyal constituencies and membership and extensive networks, at local and regional scales.

Kimberley Aboriginal organisations pulled out all stops in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 emergency. The case studies in this report document the experiences and reflections of staff employed in, among others, two resource agencies, a community corporation, and an art centre. We interviewed four of the six ACCOs who were engaged by the WA Department of Communities to coordinate the COVID-19 Return to Community Program in their areas (see the Resource Agencies and Halls Creek case studies). In doing so, they became part of the formal emergency management effort and were called upon to undertake rapid risk assessments, manage conflict and provide clear and reliable information and advice, among other things. We also spoke with a host of other organisations whose contributions deepened our understanding of what was happening in their areas during this time.

Not surprisingly, the ways in which (henceforth non-clinical) Aboriginal organisations responded to the pandemic varied widely, though in general they mobilised early. Some of the organisations that engaged with the project committed considerable funds of their own to deliver emergency relief packages to constituents and members, or to conduct emergency polls of essential infrastructure and housing. Others secured significant funding from governments or from semi-government sources such as LotteryWest (See Appendix 5) to provide support to their communities, members and/or clients, or in the case of Wirrimanu AC, from corporate/philanthropic interests.

As some of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in the region, these organisations put much effort into ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their staff and families, including through helping them to relocate from towns (see Waringarri Arts case study) and engaging them in remote work activities from home.

While most ACCOs shut down their offices, core staff continued working to maintain essential systems and processes. Where they could, organisations adapted to rapidly changing and highly pressured circumstances to keep delivering programs and services safely.

Of those that we interviewed, all but one secured JobKeeper for at least the first term, and most reported losing staff who chose to move onto Jobseeker and away from town to more remote community settings.

All the staff who we spoke with recalled a sense of sheer frustration, especially in the early weeks, at the lack of information being prioritised for Aboriginal people across the region. While there were some Aboriginal people who had been elevated to national and state level response groups, the information provided to those individuals did not necessarily feed into the Kimberley ACCO networks fast enough.

It is worth observing some characteristics of the Aboriginal organisational sector that frustrated the immediate sharing of information across the region, and these include:

- That there is no formal network of ACCOs across the region, nor is there a formal representative body for either receiving information from, or for providing information and feedback back to, government. Aboriginal groups have been calling for such a body for decades.

- Large scale Aboriginal resource agencies – which previously delivered services to remote and town-based community residents – have had their remit limited by a process of competitive contractualisation, which has seen non-Indigenous and non-local providers move into spaces once occupied by ACCOs. The demise of these larger resource agencies has seen a vacuum of both power and governance capacity develop in a number of sub-regions of the Kimberley.
- The relationship between ACCOs and government agencies was, according to some (Sullivan 2022) at an all-time low just prior to the first wave of COVID. Reasons for this include the churn in public service officers in the region, the narrowing of service delivery contract terms over time<sup>15</sup> and the continuing frustration at limited genuine engagement between ACCOs and government agencies in terms of policy directions and community development.<sup>16</sup>
- A sense in which Aboriginal organisations across the region have become increasingly siloed from each other. We observed that at local levels, there was little evidence of cooperation, let alone collaboration, among NGOs, Aboriginal or otherwise. Instances of collective effort were the exception rather than the norm, reflecting minimal investment into the building of systems and networks at local or town-based levels which would enable greater efficiencies amongst the NGO sector.

All of these factors combined to produce a disjointed landscape where, even with the best of intentions on the side of government agencies, the avenues for clear and consistent messaging and communication were far from obvious. There was an initial scramble from those agencies leading the pandemic response in the region for avenues of communication with ACCOs and Aboriginal leaders: requests were received for phone numbers and email addresses of community contacts and chairpersons across the region.

Once the health and other advice began to flow, by the second week of April a trickle of information was turning into a virtual flood. Some ACCO staff that we interviewed recalled how the volume of information became overwhelming quite quickly, and the role of their organisations shifted to filtering information about COVID-19, and then attempting to translate advice so that it made sense to their Aboriginal membership. As one author wrote elsewhere “No advice was provided for people who don’t have stable and safe housing, regular employment, a car, a mobile phone, internet access or the ability to purchase and store bulk goods.”<sup>17</sup>

Translating directions and advice into information that could reasonably be acted on by Aboriginal people, as well as in many cases translating information into Kimberley Kriol and/or other local languages, became a major preoccupation for many ACCOs. The role of such organisations here was crucial, in part because of the greater levels of trust from their membership. Avenues for communication extended far beyond the conventional mainstream media ones of television, social media and radio. Information was delivered via fliers, in some cases delivered to dozens of remote communities in person, along with hand sanitizer and other practical items, or else via community radio shows, or via posters or other physical displays on the ground. Many people we interviewed said they got information about the virus from social media, from the pages of local Aboriginal organisations.

For the purposes of this report, it is important also to acknowledge the presence of Aboriginal medical services (AMS’s), environmental health services, cultural health services and the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (KAMS). While the clinical response was not a focus of this research, it is worth making a couple of observations. While the effectiveness of AMS’s has been commented on, both in the Kimberley and by national commentators, as vital in the first wave of COVID-19 in 2020, access to these services in Kimberley communities is very uneven (see Appendix 4). In fact, many communities rely on mainstream health care via a remote community clinic staffed by the West Australian Country Health Service (WACHS), or else on regular clinics by the Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS). If the commentary is correct, and AMS’s make a vital difference to how well a community will avoid infection by COVID-19, then this unevenness is a concern.

<sup>15</sup> See Sullivan (2022 in Press: 8) “The community-controlled organisations established largely from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s now operate under tightly controlled contracts, with milestones and key performance indicators set by government contract-managers in Perth and Canberra, and usually with much more limited remit than the days when they provided multiple services driven by direct client demand.”

<sup>16</sup> Sullivan (2022 in Press: 9) observes that the interaction between Kimberley ACCOS and the public sector is characterized by “confusion, mistrust, competition and inefficiency”. See also Taylor (2020: 165) “(T)he acquisition of detailed and comprehensive data with which to assess wholesale needs and measure progress appears to have taken a back seat in favour of a focus on tenancy compliance and rationalisation of essential services involving fewer localities.”

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.croakey.org/pandemic-communications-what-have-we-learnt/>



## Flying blind: Planning a pandemic response in the absence of reliable population data

In April 2020, a report by demographer John Taylor, commissioned by the Miriwoong and Gidja peoples of the Argyle Participation Agreement, was released which sought to track socio-economic change amongst Aboriginal people of the East Kimberley over the previous 20 years, by comparing the status of the population to that documented by Taylor previously (Taylor 2020). Taylor's analysis was frustrated by the waning quality of demographic data collected in the region, particularly as it related to Aboriginal people residing in remote communities in the region. His observations are worth quoting at length:

*Unfortunately, the CHINS (Community Housing and Infrastructure Survey) was abandoned by the Australian government after the 2006 Census following the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and so the data in Table 2.7 (population figures for main settlements in the East Kimberley) are now the best remaining official data available on community population change. Precisely what has occurred in the many communities that are not listed in Table 2.7 is a moot point and one that is of interest in the context of the regional services reform process since the so-called 'Road Map' for reform uses a population minimum of 50 persons as one of its criteria for investing and divesting in services and capital works. Advice provided by the Department of Communities for a contemporaneous project in the Pilbara (RIC 2018) was that populations are underreported because their head tenant rent collection model is the only source of data and because many tenants are transient. Furthermore, they tend to rely on (inadequate) census data for population numbers and, in any event, they no longer have service responsibilities for the majority of communities.*

*Consequently, the issue of data quality/availability for particular localities often doesn't arise for the Department of Communities. The upshot (and irony) is, despite heightened policy interest in the circumstances of Aboriginal people in the region, there are now less overall data, and less reliable data, on their detailed distribution across the region than there have been in the past.*

(our emphasis) (Taylor 2020: 22).

While Taylor was able to observe a shift of perhaps around 12% of the population (2020: 21) out of smaller settlements and into large towns in the East Kimberley, such observations were heavily qualified with doubts relating to the reliability of the data collected, and an acknowledgement that many Aboriginal communities have become 'statistically invisible' both to the Census and to the WA Department of Communities.

Whatever the political or policy motivations might be for such erasure or oversight, the implications of these blind spots for pandemic planning are of major concern. Not only did Taylor raise questions relating to official data on numbers of people living in the East Kimberley as a region, but he also raised specific concerns about data held by the Department of Communities and that had been collected by the Census about housing.

*...Tables 6.4 and 6.5 ...compare the number of public rental dwellings derived from the census with equivalent data from the Department of Communities (DOC) for those remote communities in Halls Creek and Wyndham-East Kimberley LGAs where the Department manages the housing stock. Three observations emerge. First of all, data from the DOC reveal almost three times as many dwellings in these locations compared to the census. Second, because Indigenous Locations form the lowest geographic level for census output there are no data available from the census for the majority of these locations. Finally, even where geographies do match, there are invariably substantial shortfalls in census data with Wirrimanu<sup>18</sup> and Mindibungu<sup>19</sup> providing the stand-out examples. Added uncertainty arises because the DOC only provides housing at 17 out of 56 remote locations in Halls Creek LGA and at 22 out of 52 remote locations in Wyndham-East Kimberley LGA. (Taylor 2020: 106)*

He concludes: "(Th)ere are no data available from any systematic source for the remaining 68, mostly small outstation, communities, across the region where DOC housing services are not provided. Examples would include places like Frog Hollow, Crocodile Hole and Bow River." (202: 107).

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<sup>18</sup> Otherwise known as Balgo.

<sup>19</sup> Otherwise known as Billiluna.

The two surveys that had been abandoned were the CHINS in 2006 and the WA government's Environmental Health Needs Survey in 2008. Taylor notes that, "These surveys provided comprehensive public access data on the number of dwellings by bedroom size, resident populations, occupancy rates, functionality of dwellings, community facilities, measures of mobility and infrastructure needs for all discrete Aboriginal localities." (2020: 108). They also, presumably, provided data which would indicate the degree of overcrowding – or of underutilisation of housing stock – across the region, an extremely important environmental health indicator (McMullen et al 2016) and information that would have proved vital for pandemic planning, and for the identification of possible places for quarantining and self-isolation.

Taylor was similarly damning when it came to the availability of data relating to the environmental health conditions that prevailed across the region. He (2020: 114) noted that while the Department of Communities "... have now assumed responsibility for the management of municipal services from the Commonwealth this only includes 20 out of 107 locations and it essentially refers to the Remote Area Essential Services Program (RAESP) that provides a repair and maintenance service for power, water and wastewater systems at these select sites." He concluded that "...such data as exist are of limited scope and accessibility for use in the public scrutiny and assessment of regional housing and infrastructure needs and for the public monitoring of program impacts. In any event, even if systematic and comprehensive data on environmental health conditions were to be gathered and made available, the geographic coverage is currently limited to only those places across the region where services are provided... it is not possible to report on change in the presence and functionality of environmental health hardware for all Aboriginal communities across the region since the comparative data required for such an exercise no longer exist." (2020: 114).

The dearth of data relating to the state of remote communities across WA is clearly what drove the panicked call, on March 23, for the provision of such data, via Pandemic Plans, to be provided by or on behalf of, every remote community across the state.

As we document below, such was the lack of data relating to the state of remote community infrastructure that two organisations took it upon themselves, in April of 2020, to undertake rapid assessments of the housing conditions of their constituencies, conducting door-to-door surveys.<sup>20</sup>

## Residents of towns and town-based reserves

In light of Taylor's observations as to the inadequacy of regional population data, it is difficult to state with complete confidence how many Aboriginal people live in towns, and on town-based reserves, as opposed to remote communities across the region. Using estimated resident population data updated from the 2016 Census however, we estimate that around half the Aboriginal population – or 7,000 people – of the region do not live in remote communities. Just under 2,000 people live in town-based reserves (TBRs) in the Kimberley, according to the WA government's own assessments.

20<sup>21</sup> of the 37 TBRs<sup>22</sup> across the State are in the Kimberley. There is not the space here to discuss the history of these areas, why they were established or recent policy directives in WA which will see these areas 'normalised' over time.<sup>23</sup> Suffice it to say that the living conditions of residents on TBRs tend to be akin to those of remote communities, and concerns about housing maintenance and essential infrastructure are regularly reported on in these areas. Overcrowding is also a problem, perhaps more so over the wet season when many people from more remote centres move closer to towns. (See Morphy 2010) According to a local public health specialist, "... the epidemiological evidence is weak for the argument that remote communities represented a greater threat to the spread of COVID, any more than populations in regional centres and town-based reserves." (J Ward Pers. Comm.).

The major towns of the Kimberley also have large populations of Aboriginal people. Living conditions in towns are arguably better, and overcrowding less of a problem – although again, seasonality of visitors, and long waiting lists for public housing indicate that overcrowding is still a problem.

<sup>20</sup> Mirriwoong Gadjerong AC, by the 17th April 2020, conducted a rapid survey of infrastructure in 18 remote communities in the East Kimberley, and the Halls Creek Shire also commissioned a survey of the state of housing in both the town of Halls Creek and in town-based reserves. Results of both surveys were provided to government agencies, and to the authors of this report.

<sup>21</sup> Not including One Mile/ Mallingbarr near Broome, whose residents had been transitioned into town-based housing in 2019.

<sup>22</sup> These reserves are overseen by the Aboriginal Lands Trust.

<sup>23</sup> The State Government is seeking to "...transfer the ownership, management and control of ALT land to Aboriginal people". The process however has been slow, arguably because Aboriginal organisations quite rightly identify significant risks and liabilities associated with taking ownership of the aging assets on ALT lands, including community housing and infrastructure.



In terms of the WA government's response to the first wave of COVID, we would like to highlight the following:

- No special or specific provisions were made for those Aboriginal people living in the towns of the Kimberley, or on TBRs. Or if these provisions were made, they were certainly not made public.
- The Remote Aboriginal Community Directions did not apply to these areas.
- The call for pandemic plans for remote communities also did not extend to TBRs.
- Any pandemic planning that occurred for these areas was overseen by Shires, which have jurisdiction under the Emergency Management Act. For all intents and purposes, the Aboriginal people living in towns, and adjacent to towns in reserves, were not treated any differently in the pandemic planning process, despite health, housing and other factors suggesting that they ought to be.

None of the Aboriginal people we spoke to, who either lived in TBRs, or who resided in towns, including CEOs of local Aboriginal organisations, were involved, or had any awareness of, the pandemic planning that was undertaken for their town/TBR areas.<sup>24</sup> It is also our observation that many residents of TBRs, and some residents of towns, left houses in these places and returned to more remote communities, outstations and holiday camps. The absence of local Aboriginal input into pandemic planning at a town level means that these significant movements of people would not have been accounted for.

There were no restrictions on movement of people into, or out of, TBRs or towns, except to remain within Shire boundaries. Some of these populations did receive emergency provisions but this was ad hoc, and depended on whether local Aboriginal organisations were able to access emergency funding and how this was then allocated.

## Remote communities in the Kimberley

Remote Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley were subject to special provisions on movements of people in and out of these places, and these were arrived at early in the first wave of COVID-19 in 2020.

The characteristics of many remote Aboriginal communities which arguably justify these measures including:

- Uneven access to staffed health clinics, and to medical evacuations
- High levels of chronic disease
- High levels of seasonal and circular mobility
- Poor standards of environmental health and failing infrastructure
- Uneven or non-existent communications networks
- Languishing governance structures

Clearly the instruction for residents of remote communities to stay put to diminish the likelihood of them acquiring COVID was based on the best advice of epidemiologists at the time.

Two maps are provided to give an indication of the spread of remote communities across the region.

Remote communities across the region are difficult to characterise, and vary in size, social stability, political coherence and seasonal accessibility. Some have remarkably good mobile phone reception, some have none at all while others have highly variable phone reception. Some communities are self-designated as 'dry', that is, they have adopted by-laws which prohibit alcohol consumption – although most do not fall into this category. Some residents of remote communities maintain a vigorous cultural life, and speak little English. Others contain a majority of residents who identify as Christian.

It tended to be a combination of such factors that interacted with government responses to the first wave of COVID-19 and resulted in a range of unintended consequences.

We outline the Directions that remote communities were subject to more fully below (p xx- xx) and consider the observable impacts on these places of the WA government's Return to Community directive.

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<sup>24</sup> As we state elsewhere, only one remote community member interviewed as part of the project was aware of the contents of her community's Pandemic Plan.

## Pandemic plans

On 23 March, the Department of Communities sent an email to remote community contacts requesting the provision of Pandemic Plans. Attached to the email was a template for community members to fill in (see Appendix 3). Department of Communities staff were directed to assist community members to fill in these templates – although given social distancing rules, and the lack of computers, emails and internet in many remote communities, communications around the pandemic plan templates proved very challenging.

In the Fitzroy Valley these challenges were avoided because the Aboriginal resource agency Marra Worra Worra (MWW) was able to compile much of the required information for the 35 or so remote communities. In contrast, MWW's counterpart Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC), which works closely with Aboriginal people in Kununurra and the surrounding 24 communities, offered to provide input into the development of plans in Miriwoong communities – but this was not taken up by the Department of Communities, whose local office staff appear to have collated much of it.

The graph below was circulated by the Department of Communities on 8 May; the third bar down (unable to contact) suggests that difficulties in contacting people was particularly a problem in the East Kimberley, where more than 30 communities had not yet been contacted some six weeks after the call for information via Pandemic Plans.

### Count of community by Engagement Status and Sub-region

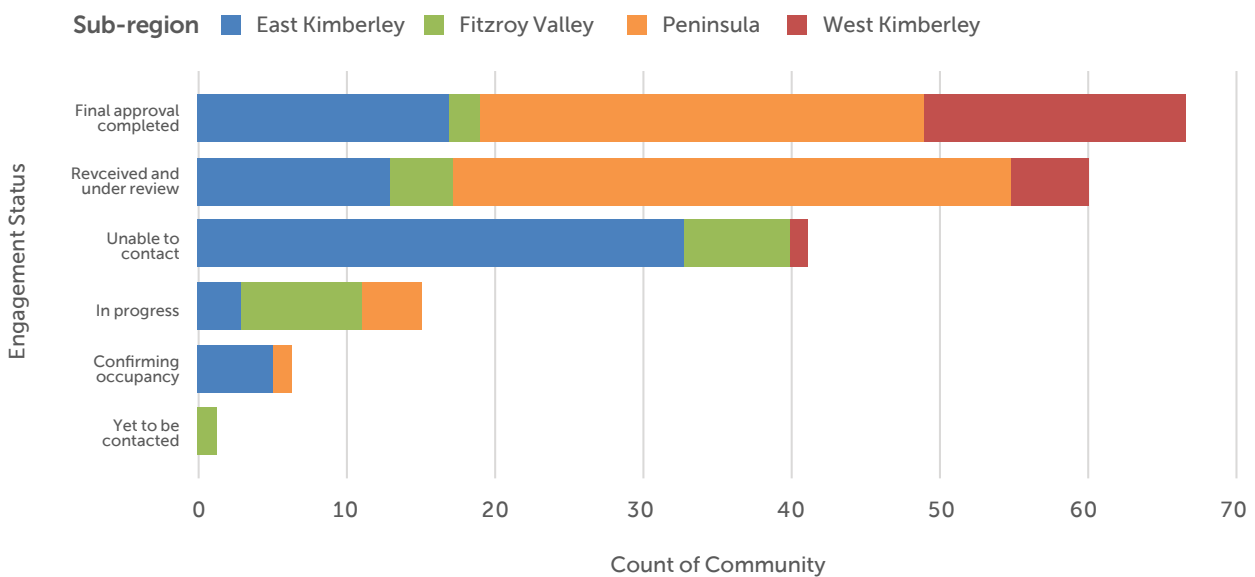


Figure 1: Count of Community by Engagement Status and Sub-Region



## REMS communities in the Kimberly region



Source: Department of Communities

### Legend

- Small and large remote communities
- Self-managed remote communities
- Towns

Figure 2: Small, Large and self-managed remote communities in the Kimberley (Map provided in WA Auditor General's Report (2021:39))

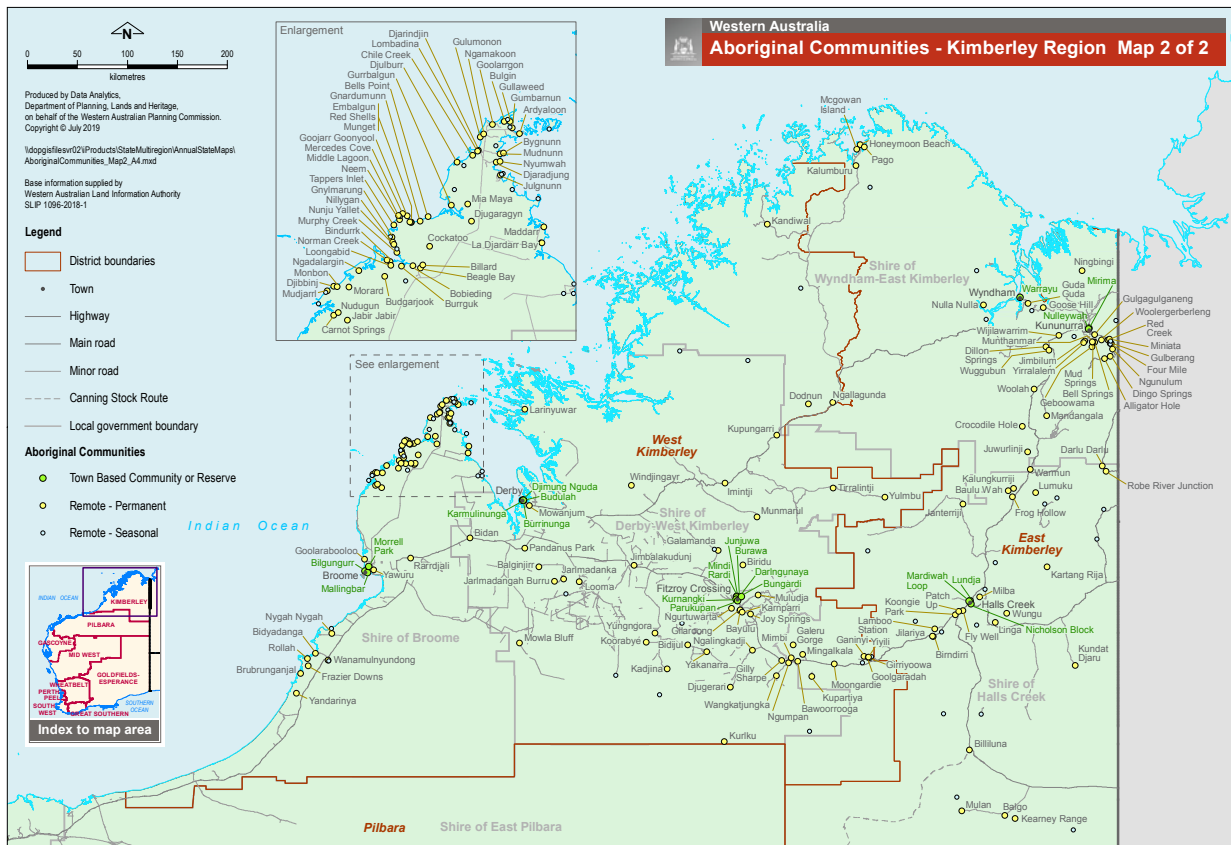


Figure 3: Aboriginal Communities, 2019, DLPH data

This image is from the WA Department of Lands, Planning and Heritage website, dated 2019 – and depicts a rather busier and more inhabited landscape than map provided to the Auditor General by the WA Department of Communities.

Table 2: Populations of largest communities in the Kimberley, 2016 ABS Census data

Largest Communities	ABS 2016 Census data <sup>25</sup>
Bayulu	322
Beagle Bay	305
Bidyandanga	555
Kalumburu	412
Ringer Soak	165
Djarindjin-lombo	395
Looma	519
Bililuna	133
Mulan	91
Wangkatjungka	228
Warmun	366
Balgo	289
Yungngora/Noonkanbah	378
<b>Total large community population</b>	<b>4484</b>

<sup>25</sup> These are the figures reported by the ABS for 2016. They are not Estimated Resident Population for 2020, which are not available at community levels. The accuracy of these figures is therefore questionable – but they are useful as a general guide for population distribution at a regional level.



## Government Measures: March – June 2020

This section provides detail on the main measures introduced by the Federal and WA governments during the period from March – June 2020 relevant to this research. It is usefully read with the Table: Key dates in government(s) COVID responses in Appendix 1.

At the start of March 2020, Australia had 25 confirmed COVID-19 cases. The number increased quickly with new cases averaging 16 per day over the first two weeks of the month to averaging 293 per day in the final two.<sup>26</sup>

On 18 March, the Commonwealth Government declared a Human Biosecurity Emergency in response to COVID-19. This allowed it to use emergency powers to make legally enforceable determinations (rules) to prevent the spread of the virus.

Under the Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth), a human biosecurity emergency can be declared where it is reasonably necessary to prevent or control disease posing a severe and immediate threat of harm. In the context of COVID-19, a biosecurity risk under this legislation would be defined as the:

- likelihood of a disease spreading in Australian territory
- potential for that disease to cause harm to human health and/or economic consequences.

The declaration gives the Federal Health Minister broad powers to determine any emergency requirements or give any direction to any person where the Minister is satisfied the direction is necessary to prevent or control the spread of COVID-19.<sup>27</sup>

From mid-March to June 2020, there were two COVID-19-related emergency powers in force across WA, the Emergency Powers and Public Health Powers. Both emergency declarations have been extended by the relevant Ministers and, at the time of writing, both remain in place.<sup>28</sup>

On 15 March 2020, the WA Government declared a State of Emergency in response to COVID-19. This allowed it to use emergency powers to create legally enforceable directions that aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19.<sup>29</sup> On 16 March 2020, the WA Government declared a Public Health Emergency under the Public Health Act 2016 (WA) (the Public Health Act) allowing it to exercise Public Health Powers.<sup>30</sup>

Both sets of powers have been used to:

- restrict access to remote Aboriginal communities and the Kimberley
- limit access to WA from other Australian states and territories
- require some interstate and all overseas arrivals to quarantine
- place density limits on venues and limits on large gatherings
- require businesses and activities to practice social distancing, restrict some businesses and enforce venue density limits
- require any close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases and anyone tested or suspected of having COVID-19 to quarantine
- require anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 to isolate
- restrict access to aged care facilities

On 2 April, the WA Government advised that the Emergency Management Amendment (COVID-19 Response) Bill had passed both Houses of Parliament, with new laws to help enforce self-isolation and increase penalties for COVID-19 related incidents.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/measuring-impacts-covid-19-mar-may-2020>

<sup>27</sup> For more information on the Act, see <https://justiceconnect.org.au/resources/how-the-federal-governments-emergency-restrictions-on-coronavirus-covid-19-work/>

<sup>28</sup> [www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/extension-of-western-australia-declaration-no3-of-public-health-state-of-emergency-19-november-2021](http://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/extension-of-western-australia-declaration-no3-of-public-health-state-of-emergency-19-november-2021)

<sup>29</sup> See <https://justiceconnect.org.au/resources/how-the-wa-governments-emergency-restrictions-on-covid-19-work/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/extension-of-state-of-emergency-declaration-5-november-2021-19-november-2021>

<sup>31</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), F Logan (WA Minister for Emergency Services) and M Roberts (WA Minister for Police), New emergency management powers to combat COVID-19, media release, 2 April 2020.

## Government Directions about Travel

### Federal Measures

Using its biosecurity emergency powers, the Federal government imposed its first restrictions on travel, closing national borders to all non-residents, and requiring returning residents to spend two weeks in supervised quarantine hotels.

The National Cabinet<sup>32</sup> was formed on 13 March 2020 and comprised the Prime Minister and all state and territory premiers and chief ministers. At its first meeting on 15 March, members agreed to the implementation of the following measures: a ban on overseas travel from Australia; a ban on arrivals into Australia except for Australian citizens, residents, immediate family members and travellers who have been in New Zealand for the previous 14 days; and a limit on international passenger arrivals.<sup>33</sup>

All other restrictions are controlled by the states and territories.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities across the country had responded to the emergency early and quickly. In response to calls from the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and others, the Federal Health Minister with support from the Minister for Indigenous Australians used his expanded powers to make a new Determination under the Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth). The 'Emergency Requirements for Remote Communities' Determination (henceforth, the Determination) came into effect on 26 March.

### State Measures

Using its emergency powers, the WA Government has issued a number of Directions restricting travel into WA from interstate and within WA.

In March 2020, it introduced border controls for interstate arrivals with a 14-day self-isolation requirement, and on 5 April, closed the state border.

### Remote Aboriginal Community Restrictions

On 18 March, the WA Government introduced the Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions to limit the spread of COVID-19, through restricting access in and out of WA's 274 communities, large and small.<sup>34</sup> Exceptions included access for medical reasons, emergencies and obtaining essential services and supplies, ensuring food security with fines of up to \$50,000 applying to those who breached the measures.

Under the original Directions, any person outside the boundary of a remote Aboriginal community must not enter the boundaries of the community, and any person within a remote Aboriginal community must remain within the boundaries of that community. These were amended two days later to clarify and provide certainty to who could enter the communities (Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions #2).<sup>35</sup> Under the updated measures, a person can only enter or remain on the land or waters if they are returning to the community where they normally reside or work, for family and cultural purposes, to provide or access essential or human services or supplies, in an emergency, or if authorised by the Police Commissioner or an authorised officer. On 4 June, Directions #3 replaced #2. The former allowed for a broader designation of essential, community and human services.<sup>36</sup>

Government did not arrive at these measures in isolation. In the Kimberley, and particularly in the second half of March, Aboriginal organisations, medical and otherwise, along with the Kimberley Development Commission, local shires and others, undertook intensive lobbying for government to put in place – and later, to withdraw – measures, including to close the region and to shut Shire boundaries.

<sup>32</sup> The national cabinet is technically an intergovernmental forum, akin to COAG but with streamlined processes deemed necessary for fast decision making during the COVID-19 emergency.

<sup>33</sup> At its first meeting on 15 March 2020, members agreed to a range of measures, including: all international arrivals to self-isolate; cruise ships from foreign ports are banned from arriving at Australian ports; and additional social distancing requirements, such as a ban on non-essential gatherings of more than 500 people. At its second meeting on 17 March, the measures announced included: a ban on non-essential indoor gatherings of greater than 100 people, further restrictions on outdoor gatherings, and stronger arrangements to protect older Australians in residential aged care facilities.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/03/New-Directions-to-protect-remote-Aboriginal-communities-from-COVID-19.aspx> and [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp2021/Chronologies/COVID-19StateTerritoryGovernmentAnnouncements#\\_Toc52275801-](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp2021/Chronologies/COVID-19StateTerritoryGovernmentAnnouncements#_Toc52275801-)

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/mediaFiles/about-us/ABOUT\\_US\\_G\\_RAP\\_Remote\\_Aboriginal\\_Communities\\_Dirtections\\_COVID19.pdf](https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/mediaFiles/about-us/ABOUT_US_G_RAP_Remote_Aboriginal_Communities_Dirtections_COVID19.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/Remote%20Aboriginal%20Communities%20Directions%20%28No.%203%29.pdf>

### Intra-WA restrictions

On 26 March, the WA Government partnered with the Federal Government to implement new restrictions for access to designated regions of WA to further restrict the movement of people in the Kimberley and remote Aboriginal communities, with limited special exemptions.<sup>37</sup> These were the Kimberley, comprising all four local government areas; the Shire of Ngaanyatjaraku; and parts of the Shire of East Pilbara encompassing the communities of Jigalong, Martu homeland communities and Kivirrkurra. The restrictions were enforceable through the emergency determination powers under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (Cth).

Under these arrangements, any person outside a designated region could only enter that region if that person was providing essential services or supplies or has been quarantined from the general public for the previous 14 days.

These designated areas account for approximately one third of the geographical area of WA and almost 90% of the state's remote communities and remote Aboriginal population. Within the designated regions and for all remote Aboriginal communities outside these designated regions, the WA Government's *Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions* will continue to apply.

On 4 June, the Federal Government agreed to remove the Commonwealth Biosecurity restrictions so that the three areas could reopen to the rest of the state the next day.<sup>38</sup>

### Kimberley travel restrictions

On 2 April, following confirmation of positive COVID-19 cases, the WA Premier announced additional Kimberley travel restrictions to stop the movement of people between towns and local government areas.<sup>39</sup> Travel was heavily restricted between all four local government areas (LGAs) within the region (shires of Broome, Derby West Kimberley, Wyndham East Kimberley and Halls Creek). Kimberley residents were urged to stay within their boundary, and to avoid all non-essential travel. Some exemptions applied.

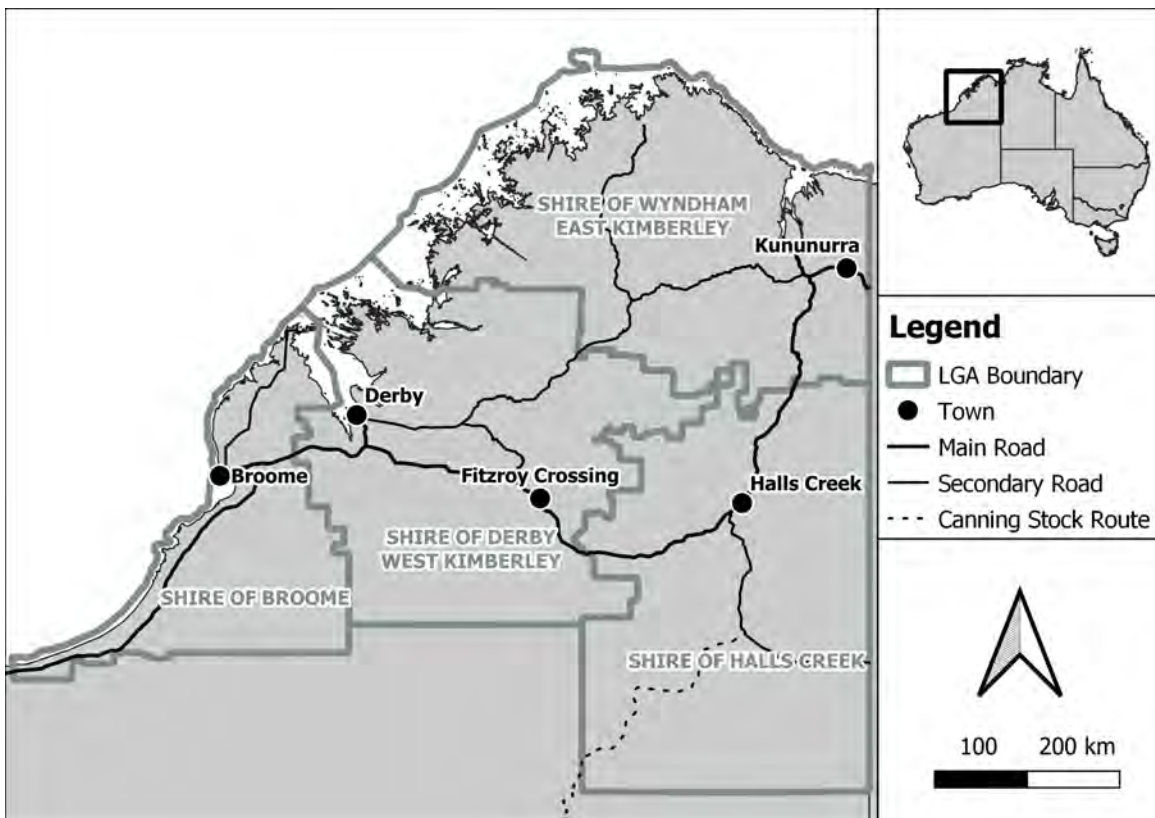


Figure 4: Kimberley Local Government Areas and major towns

<sup>37</sup> G Hunt (Minister for Health) and K Wyatt (Minister for Indigenous Australians), *Travel restrictions for remote areas commence tonight*, media release, 26 March 2020; B Wyatt (WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs), *Access restricted to protect people living in the Kimberley and remote Aboriginal communities*, media release, 26 March 2020.

<sup>38</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), R Cook (WA Minister for Health) and B Wyatt (WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs), *Kimberley to reopen to the rest of Western Australia*, media release, 4 June 2020

<sup>39</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), *Stronger restrictions in place to protect Kimberley residents from COVID-19*, media release, 2 April 2020.

On 17 May, the WA Government revoked the prohibition on travel between local government districts in the Kimberley, and on 25 May, it announced that regional travel boundaries would be further reduced, with only the regions bound by the Commonwealth's designated biosecurity determination and remote Aboriginal communities remaining restricted.

## Government Directions about Quarantine and Isolation

On 2 April, the WA Government advised that the Emergency Management Amendment (COVID-19 Response) Bill had passed both Houses of Parliament, with new laws to help enforce self-isolation and increase penalties for COVID-19 related incidents.<sup>40</sup>

On 9 May, the WA Government used its emergency powers to issue the Isolation (Diagnosed) Directions and Quarantine and Isolation (Undiagnosed) Directions aimed at controlling the movement of people in the community who have, or may have, COVID-19. These directions have been amended as circumstances change.

## Government Directions about Social Distancing Measures

On 18 March, the newly formed National Cabinet agreed to the first social distancing measures of limiting the size of public gatherings. On 30 March, the National Cabinet announced: reductions to public gatherings to two people; that people should leave their homes only to shop for essentials, to travel to work or education or to receive medical care; a 6-month ban on rental evictions; and that businesses including gyms, pubs and cinemas should close.<sup>41</sup>

On 8 May, the Prime Minister announced National Cabinet's three-step plan for easing restrictions.<sup>42</sup>

Under its emergency management powers, the WA Government has declared directions to control community gatherings, activities and public access to certain places in the State. These directions have been amended as circumstances change.

On 23 June 2021 the WA Government amended the directions to remove most of the restrictions on gatherings and activities, leaving restrictions in place for large events only.

## Government Economic Measures

On 12 March, the Federal Government announced a \$17.6 billion economic plan. The package provided support to the most severely affected sectors, regions and communities; and the first household stimulus payment, a one-off \$750 stimulus payment to pensioners, social security, veteran and other income support recipients and eligible concession card holders, as well as small and medium sized business (for retaining staff etc.).

From 20 March, the JobSeeker Payment replaced the Newstart Allowance and a number of other payments.<sup>43</sup>

On 22 March, the Federal Government announced a second economic package.<sup>44</sup> Additional measures included:

- Coronavirus Supplement for new and existing recipients of JobSeeker Payment (see above 20 March 2020), Parenting Payment, Youth Allowance for jobseekers, Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit. The supplement almost doubled the maximum payment rate for a JobSeeker Payment recipient.
- Support to households through a second \$750 payment to social security and veteran income support recipients and eligible concession card holders.
- Early release of superannuation (\$10,000 in 2019–20 and a further \$10,000 in 2020–21) for those experiencing financial hardship.
- Temporary reduction of the minimum superannuation drawdown requirements.

On 23 March, the Commonwealth's Community Development Program's (CDP) mutual obligations were suspended.<sup>45</sup>

From 31 March, eligible people received a second one-off payment of \$750.

<sup>40</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), F Logan (WA Minister for Emergency Services) and M Roberts (WA Minister for Police), New emergency management powers to combat COVID-19, media release, 2 April 2020. Also see <https://www.timebase.com.au/news/2020/AT05022-article.html>

<sup>41</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp2021/Chronologies/COVID19-IndigenousAustralians](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp2021/Chronologies/COVID19-IndigenousAustralians)

<sup>42</sup> S Morrison (Prime Minister), Update on coronavirus measures, statement, 8 May 2020

<sup>43</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/New\\_coronavirus\\_supplement](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/New_coronavirus_supplement)

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/New\\_coronavirus\\_supplement](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/New_coronavirus_supplement)

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/announcements/community-development-programme>



## JobKeeper

JobKeeper, administered via the Australian Tax Office, was a payment to businesses to enable them to continue paying staff during the downturn, who might otherwise have lost their jobs (and ended up on JobSeeker).

It was introduced by the Commonwealth Government as a subsidy to help keep businesses trading and people employed during the COVID-19 pandemic. From 28 September 2020, changes to the payment came into effect with affected employers and sole traders now able to claim either \$1,200 or \$750 per fortnight per eligible employee based on eligibility requirements. Further details on eligible recipients is provided in the survey Methodology.

In November, approximately one in 17 (6%) Australians reported currently receiving the JobKeeper Payment from their employer. This is a decrease from September when 14% of Australians reported receiving the JobKeeper payment.

## Income-related: Coronavirus Supplement and early super access

During the 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns – and beginning on payments received on 27 April 2020 – the Australian Government introduced a temporary \$550 per fortnight Coronavirus Supplement to increase social security payments for working-age people – JobSeeker Payment (formerly the Newstart Allowance), Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance, Youth Allowance, Austudy, ABSTUDY Living Allowance, Parenting Payment, Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit. This increase effectively doubled the incomes of many income support recipients, including those receiving the main unemployment benefits.

The intent of these increased payments was to stimulate the Australian economy.

From September 2020, these payments – referred to henceforth as the Coronavirus Supplement – were reduced from \$550 to \$250 per fortnight, and then further reduced in January 2021. These payments ended on March 31, 2021.

Others across Australia have commented on the dramatic reduction in poverty experienced by Aboriginal people in remote areas as a result of the Coronavirus Supplement (Markham 2020; Staines, Altman et al 2021)

In terms of the Kimberley, the COVID supplement represented a significant and regular injection of cash, most particularly to those families and in those areas where poverty was at its greatest.

Table 3: ADH21-0302: Monthly Time Series of JobSeeker Payment recipients by Indigenous status and Kimberley LGAs

Date of payment	Broome (S)	Derby-West Kimberley (S)	Halls Creek (S)	Wyndham-East Kimberley (S)
27/03/20	932	1,036	546	526
24/04/20	1,009	1,084	600	571
29/05/20	1,064	1,149	641	601
26/06/20	1,074	1,176	642	613
31/07/20	1,081	1,184	652	618
28/08/20	1,075	1,205	647	625
25/09/20	1,061	1,199	628	603
30/10/20	946	1,238	634	635
27/11/20	962	1,175	529	544
25/12/20	1,054	1,238	615	607
29/01/21	1,011	1,149	495	479
26/02/21	1,001	1,118	532	509
26/03/21	959	1,156	496	516
30/04/21	925	1,098	522	482

Source: Commonwealth Department of Social Services

What this means is that between late March and September 2020, Aboriginal people in the region received an extra \$22, 386,100 in their pockets.

Nationally, research by Phillips, Gray and Biddle (2020) found that individuals receiving JobSeeker or Youth Allowance had the largest reduction in household poverty, with poverty rates falling dramatically from 67 per cent to 7 per cent.

There are a couple of further observations to make about the table above. The first is that, despite some commentators arguing that a risk of such a stimulant package was that it would see low paid workers leave the workforce and take up JobSeeker payments, the numbers of welfare recipients on Jobseeker in the Kimberley only increased by between 5 and 10 percent in that first week of the supplement, and by the end of April 2021, in three of the four Shires, the numbers of people on welfare post-COVID supplement was less than before the pandemic.

The positive impacts of this increased income were reported on by many interviewees and is detailed below, although there were also negative impacts, particularly relating to increased gunja and alcohol consumption. Both negative and positive impacts were also reported in the media.<sup>46</sup> Similar patterns of increased alcohol consumption were reported nationally during 2020, for reasons not dissimilar to those we found for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley: being 'stuck at home', stress and boredom.<sup>47</sup>

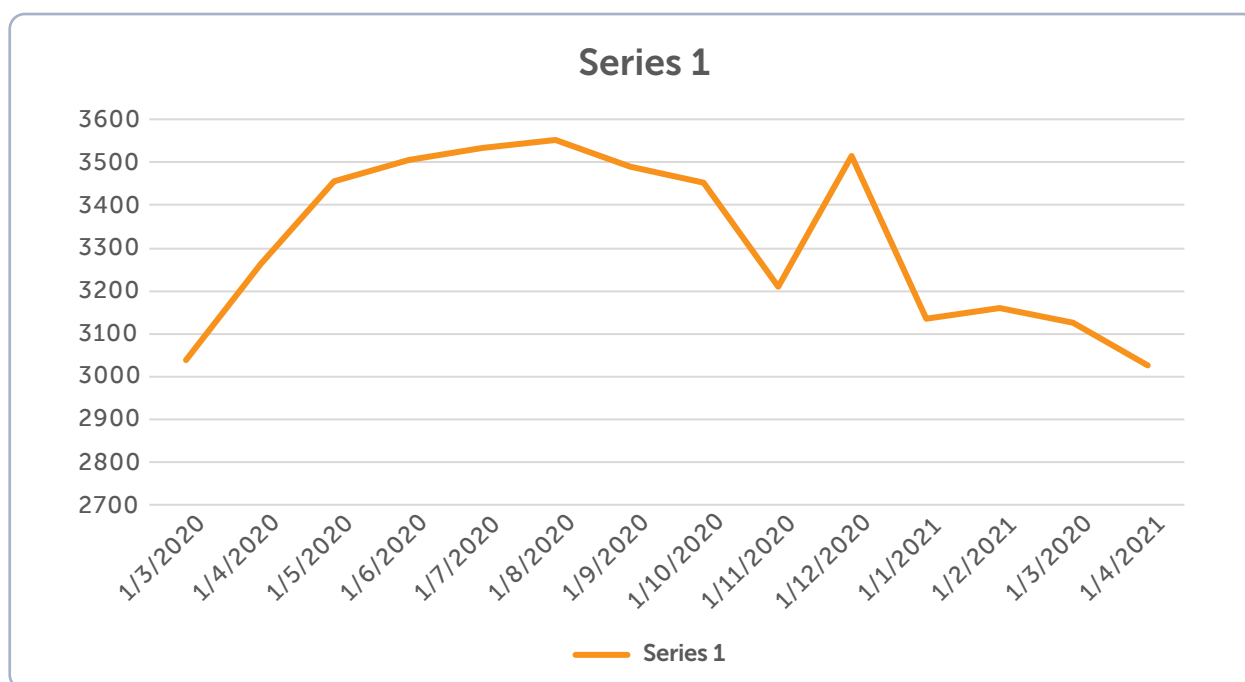


Table 4: Total numbers of Aboriginal people across the Kimberley receiving COVID Supplement March 2020 – April 2021

Source: Australian Department of Social Services

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-12/covid-payments-linked-to-violence-in-kimberley/12443220>;  
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-19/how-coronavirus-helped-a-remote-indigenous-community/12373276>  
<sup>47</sup> <https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/alcohol-consumption-increases-during-covid-19-crisis>



JobKeeper data that was provided by the Commonwealth Department of Treasury did not distinguish between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal recipients; nonetheless many Aboriginal organisations reported that they were able to access JobKeeper to retain their staff.

### Super Access

Between April 2020 and January 2021, more than \$36 billion dollars of superannuation was accessed by Australians via the Commonwealth government's COVID-19 Early Release Scheme. Unfortunately, no data was collected by the ATO,<sup>48</sup> which was facilitating this process, about regions below a state level or ethnic identification. There is therefore no way to know how many Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, nor across Australia, accessed their superannuation via this scheme. We can report however that many people interviewed, particularly where they had access to a computer and the requisite level of English language literacy, did access their super, many more than once. Some Aboriginal community organisations that participated in this research reported assisting members to access super.

A number of Aboriginal interviewees reported large purchases using these lump sums to set up small businesses: a boat for a tourism enterprise at One Arm Point; and swags and a trailer for a camping tourism business out of Fitzroy Crossing. Another respondent purchased a bank of solar panels for her remote community, which no longer received servicing or assistance for the provision of electricity, and a Broome-based person purchased a boat for family provisioning. People also were reported to have purchased motorbikes and cars, the costs of which were, according to mechanics we interviewed, significantly elevated during the first COVID lockdown.

## Other relevant WA Government Measures

### Alcohol restrictions

On 25 March, the State Government brought in temporary limits for takeaway alcohol brought across the WA.<sup>49</sup> Under the changes, takeaway alcohol was limited to the following amounts, per customer, each day: one carton of beer, cider or pre-mixed spirits; or three bottles of wine; or one litre of spirits; or one litre of fortified wine; or a combination of any two of the above (but not a combination of two of the same product).

On 20 April, the WA Government lifted the state-wide alcohol restrictions.

On 15 May, following submissions to the Department and consultation with the Commissioner of Police, the restrictions were reinstated in the Kimberley.

### Governing the pandemic at a Kimberley region level

On 15 March 2020, Hon Francis Logan, Minister for Emergency Services, declared a State of Emergency in WA with effect from 12am, 16 March 2020, due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19. The declaration was enabled through section 56 of the Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA).

On 16 March 2020, Hon Roger Cook, Minister for Health, declared a Public Health State of Emergency, effective 12am 17 March 2020. The declaration was made under section 167 of the Public Health Act 2016.<sup>50</sup>

A State of Emergency is a government declaration that may:

- Suspend certain normal functions of government
- Alert the community to the situation and request they alter their normal behaviours
- Order government agencies to implement emergency preparedness plans.

There is no single 'emergency' law in Australia which gives one government all the power to formulate and implement a national response. However, the Federal Government has powers and functions in various Federal laws which may be exercised during States of Emergency to assist the States and Territories in responding to and managing the emergency.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The ATO only collected data on the basis of Superannuation Entity, and at a state level.

<sup>49</sup> WA Department of Premier and Cabinet (2020). "COVID-19 response: Temporary changes to takeaway alcohol – 25 March 2020." from <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/03/COVID-19-response-Temporary-changes-to-takeaway-alcohol.aspx>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/covid-19-coronavirus-state-of-emergency-declarations>

<sup>51</sup> <https://justiceconnect.org.au/resources/how-do-emergency-powers-work-across-australia/> See appendix XX for WA State Emergency Management Plan Committee Structure

These declarations in WA allowed for the exercise of certain emergency powers, such as:

- Order persons to undergo medical observations or procedures
- Direct or prohibit the movement of persons
- Enter, search or take control of any place
- Close any road, access route or area
- Issue directions to public authorities, and
- Direct owners/occupiers of places of business to close to the public.

The WA Department of Health was the designated Hazard Management Agency under this declaration, and hence continues to have the lead responsibility across government for pandemic related issues. In the Kimberley, the lead agency is the West Australian Country Health Service (WACHS).

At a state level, a massive and rapid shift occurred in inter- and intra- agency arrangements as well as in State/ Commonwealth arrangements to enable a response to the pandemic which was coherent across the WA government. Arguably the machinations of government at this level exhibited a degree of agility which is rarely witnessed in the public sector. The breadth of responses from government agencies that the first wave of COVID-19 required is quite simply breathtaking, and the responsiveness across these agencies in those first months of 2020 is commendable.

Of interest in the context of this report is the intersection of government responses, and the mechanics of those responses, with the Aboriginal decision-making and information-sharing networks and processes of the Kimberley. Clearly the WA government was aware of the very high risk posed to remote Aboriginal communities by COVID-19, and one of the first directives in WA, by Chris Dawson, on the 18 March, was the Remote Aboriginal Communities Directive (Appendix 10). By April 7, a 'complex task team'<sup>52</sup> had been established within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, expressly to ensure coordination across government agencies in terms of their responses and their impact on remote Aboriginal communities. We are informed that the Departments of Health, Communities and WA Police similarly established internal teams whose sole focus was on remote Aboriginal communities, and daily briefings were held across these teams.

Bureaucratic process was minimised, and responsiveness prioritised: "In all my time in government, I have never seen the State and Commonwealth coordination that close and that effective." (Worsdell 2020)

It is impossible to estimate the amount of government investment in the COVID response, but according to senior bureaucrats interviewed in 2020, funding<sup>53</sup> was being made available for everything from grading roads, to purchasing pallets of food for Bidyadanga, to fixing taps and putting up signs to warn tourists about not entering remote communities.<sup>54</sup>

At a Kimberley level, and at levels below the regional level, various committees and other structures were established to manage the emergency response. An Operational Area Support Group, established to support WACHS, was set up, and included senior representatives from WACHS, KAMS, Police, DFES, Department of Communities and the Premier and Cabinet's Remote Aboriginal Communities Complex Task Team. A representative from the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) also attended these meetings until October 2020, when there was a change in leadership at that organisation.

At a sub-regional level, the four Kimberley Shires were required to establish Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCS)<sup>55</sup> to "oversee, plan and test the local emergency management arrangements". The extent of participation of local Aboriginal people in these planning committees was difficult to ascertain. In the Shire of Broome, there was also an Incident Support Group (ISG), attended by representatives from WA Police (both town-based and remote community based within the Shire), NBY (Broome Traditional Owners), the Shire of Broome, the Broome Airport, the Broome Port Authority, Department of Communities, and Department of Justice, WACHS and DFES. By June 2020, the ISG was meeting monthly. In Halls Creek, the membership of the local ISG was similar, and comprised members from the Department of Health, WACHS, WA Police, Department of Communities, Yura Yungi AMS and the Shire of Halls Creek.

<sup>52</sup> Name of this team changed in 2021 to Remote Aboriginal Communities: Emergency Mobilisation Unit.

<sup>53</sup> The Remote Aboriginal Communities COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund (RACCERF) was allocated a further \$3.1M to "to finance emergency works and enhance liveability in remote communities". We were not able to ascertain when this funding was made available, and what amount had been allocated previously. (Question Without Notice No. 1234 asked in the Legislative Council on 5 November 2020 by Hon Ken Baston)

<sup>54</sup> RACCERF emergency relief projects included sewerage repairs, RFDS medical chests, plumbing, COVID-19 and health and safety signage, electrical repairs, grading safe access tracks, governance training, and emergency fuel provision and electrical connection for cold and dry storage. Almost all of the projects funded to date are directly to Aboriginal communities or corporations.

<sup>55</sup> Under section 38(1) of the Emergency Management Act.



In addition, on 25 March, the Kimberley Aboriginal COVID-19 Taskforce was established for the region, which was supported by staff with the Remote Aboriginal Communities Complex Task Team of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Taskforce was chaired by the then Acting CEO of the KLC and comprised senior Aboriginal staff from a select number of Kimberley Aboriginal organisations:

- the Chair of Miriwoong Gajerrong Aboriginal Corporation, Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC), Kununurra
- the CEO of Nyamba Buru Yawuru PBC, Broome
- the Chair of Nirrumbuk, Environmental Health, based in Broome but working across various sites in the region
- the CEO of Nindilingarri, Cultural/Primary Health organisation, Fitzroy Valley
- the CEO of Marra Worra Worra, Resource Agency, Fitzroy Crossing
- the CEO of Winun Ngari, Resource Agency, Derby
- the CEO of Kununurra Waringarri AC, Resource agency, Kununurra
- the Chair of Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, regional organisation, Fitzroy Crossing
- the CEO of KAMS, Broome
- the Chair of Wirrimanu AC, Balgo community
- the Social Justice Commissioner, Human Rights Commission, based in Fitzroy Crossing for most of 2020

The Taskforce was established, in the view of one of its members, because there was no vehicle for government to talk to ACCOs across the region, and government responses to the threat of COVID-19 were coming out on an hourly basis. The point was also made that the Taskforce was never meant to be representative although members were from across the region.

We were able to interview seven of the members of the Taskforce as part of this project. Some of these members observed that, had there been a proper regional body representing Aboriginal interests in the Kimberley, there would have been no need for such a body. Others noted that the elevated level of engagement during this period gave them a clearer view on pre-existing exclusion from government agency discussions: "I have never been in a meeting with so many stakeholders (government and everyone) and I have never felt so well informed. But in retrospect, I am struck by how isolated we are normally! At the peak of COVID, I knew everything that was going on, in every sector, across the region." (Garstonne 2020)

In addition to committees set up under the Emergency Management Act, and the Aboriginal Taskforce, networks established as part of existing District Leadership Groups (DLG) in the East and West Kimberley were leveraged to provide regular updates on the WA Government's response to COVID-19. (See Appendix 6 for DLG membership). While there were 15 government agencies on the District Leadership Group, 10 ACCOs and four non-Indigenous NGOs were invited to join. Because of social distancing rules, these meetings were conducted largely online.

The picture painted above is one of intense action on the part of governments across all scales in response to the pandemic in the Kimberley, and of greatly improved coordination. This is certainly how government actors experienced their role, and many spoke with pride about the response of their agency.

On the other hand, however, frustration was repeatedly experienced by Aboriginal leaders, organisations and their staff across the region in terms of accessing up-to-date information and having input into the decisions that were being taken in the name of safeguarding Aboriginal people. So, while government officers experienced greater engagement with Aboriginal people and organisations than they had previously, Aboriginal people experienced a sense of exclusion and frustration.

Some people interviewed in the East Kimberley reported that decision making retreated dramatically to Broome and to Perth. Specific observations were that there was a need for better local coordination mechanisms other than the LEMC in Kununurra, that the processes around such committees needed to be more lateral, and that town-based local pandemic plans should have been worked up in consultation with ACCOs.

For very valid reasons, most discussions about a pandemic response occurred via Zoom meetings, and teleconferences; they therefore excluded significant numbers of Aboriginal leaders. This was arguably inevitable, but does shine a light on the unequalness of access to these kinds of technology, and communication channels, that remain so essential to communications in such circumstances.

This discussion on governing the pandemic needs to be considered in light of the usual way of engaging with Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, whether for government, non-government or ACCO, and that is the importance of face-to-face meetings. A number of remote community people bemoaned the fact that no government person, or medical person, had come to speak to them about the dangers of COVID-19.

## Case Studies

### Resource Agencies on the COVID frontline: Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation and Marra Worra Worra

In the frontline response to the threat that COVID-19 posed to Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, the local organisations that the WA Government put most reliance on outside of the health sector were six Aboriginal community organisations located in each of the region's towns: these were the three resource agencies of Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC),<sup>56</sup> Marra Worra Worra (MWW) in Fitzroy Crossing and Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Corporation in Broome, along with the three community organisations of Jungarni Jutiya in Halls Creek, Ngnowar Aerwah in Wyndham, and Garl Garl Walbu Alcohol Association in Derby.

These organisations coordinated and implemented two key emergency measures across the region as part of the COVID Return to Communities Program:

- Supporting Aboriginal people in regional towns and other WA regions to move back to their home communities.<sup>57</sup>
- Providing food and other provisions to Aboriginal people relocating to their home communities.

#### The COVID 19 Return to Community Program

*Right now, Aboriginal people are safest in their home community, not in town. Therefore, the State Government is supporting community members to return to their community. Community members who are currently in other towns or regions should return home where possible. There will be no cost to residents for this travel and they will be supported to obtain food and supplies for their return. The Aboriginal Community Connectors Program will be helping to do this and ensuring that anyone showing signs of illness will be linked to relevant health services. People in the Kimberley are asked to go home to prepare for isolation.*

In March 2020, the WA Government allocated \$750,000 to supporting the return of Aboriginal people in the state to their home communities.<sup>58</sup> The program of assisted relocations occurred in rapidly changing and highly pressured circumstances.

According to Department of Communities staff, the Program ran for some five days; from 23 - 25 March until 1 April,<sup>59</sup> when the four local government areas (LGAs) in the Kimberley were closed after a sharp increase in regional COVID cases.<sup>60</sup> However, at least three of the frontline organisations we interviewed continued to provide emergency management support well beyond early April through May to mid-June. Once the restrictions on movement between the shires were put in place, they pivoted their role to keeping people safe within their own LGAs.<sup>61</sup>

This may in part explain the divergence between the Departmental figures on the total number of Kimberley Aboriginal people who were supported to relocate – some 1,100<sup>62</sup> – and the data that was provided in our interviews with the resource agencies, which reveal significantly higher numbers than that (See Appendix 9: Department of Communities Return to Community program data).

Moreover, it is important to note that many families and individuals moved on their own without government assistance or were helped by Aboriginal community organisations not funded by the government (see, for example, the Waringarri Aboriginal Arts case study) or were members of communities who called for their return before the Program began (such as Warmun Community Inc.).

<sup>56</sup> <http://kwac.com.au/>

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Kimberley Bulletin, COVID-19 [Coronavirus] Responses, 27 March 2020. This was the first of nine COVID-19 bulletins produced for Aboriginal people by the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service, Binari-Binyja Yarrowoo and Empowered Communities between March and 9 June 2020.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-05/wa-bush-communities-offer-refuge-from-coronavirus/12112090>

<sup>58</sup> Email from Gemma Archer, Principal Project Officer, Governance, Integrity and Reform

<sup>59</sup> Department of Communities on 25 August 2021.

<sup>60</sup> B Wyatt (WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs), Access restricted to protect people living in the Kimberley and remote Aboriginal communities, media release, 26 March 2020. Also refer to section Government Measures: March - June 2020.

<sup>61</sup> KWAC continued to receive requests for COVID-19 support until November 2020.

<sup>62</sup> Government of Western Australia (29 May 2020). Submission to Withdraw from the Biosecurity Determination for Remote Communities. Submission to Hon Greg Hunt MP, Parliament House, Canberra.



Between late 2020 and July 2021, we interviewed the CEOs and senior staff of KWAC and MWW about their experiences putting into place and running the emergency management measures.<sup>63</sup> These resource agencies were among the first wave of Aboriginal community organisations set up by Kimberley Aboriginal people in the late '70s and '80s.<sup>64</sup>

In engaging them in March 2020, the Department of Communities recognised that these ACCOs were best placed with capacity and connections to coordinate and implement the activities in their jurisdictions.<sup>65</sup> It helped that contracts with the Department were already in place, including in KWAC's case for the delivery of the Community Connectors Program (CCP) – formerly, and still referred to locally, as community or night patrols.

After securing their agreement between 23 – 25 March,<sup>66</sup> the Department provided a lump sum of \$50,000 to each.<sup>67</sup> Our interviews revealed how differently the organisations ran things, which “had not been unexpected” according to the program manager, who recognised that each would do things “in ways that suited the people that they interacted with.” (L Sperring: 2021)

### On the frontline in Kununurra and the greater East Kimberley



Staff from Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC), Kununurra (Credit: KWAC)

KWAC – or Waringarri Corp as it is known locally – has been operating for 42 years and was the first, and now only, resource agency in the East Kimberley.<sup>68</sup> From 24 March - 22 June 2020, it supported 323 people through the COVID-19 Return to Communities program. The first were arrivals in Kununurra from Karratha on a Greyhound bus, but by the following day, the Patrol had transported 74 people to communities in the Kununurra surrounds. By 26 March, staff had organised for the first of seven charter flights to the North Kimberley and the next day a charter bus to Halls Creek departed.

<sup>63</sup> We also interviewed the frontline organisation Jungarni Jutiya AC, which is detailed in the Halls Creek case study, and the CEO of one other ACCO who did not consent to the use of the interview information.

<sup>64</sup> The first Kimberley Aboriginal organisation, the Kimberley Land Council, was formed in 1978 as a regionally representative body. Across the following decade, Aboriginal people in the six Kimberley towns and in Warmun (Turkey Creek) set up their own resource agencies. Of these, Ngoonjuwah AC in Halls Creek closed in 2007, Joorak Ngarni AC in Wyndham in 2012 and Balangarri AC in Warmun in the late '90s leaving KWAC as the last resource agency in the East Kimberley.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Linda Sperring, Executive Director, Remote Communities, Department of Communities on 19 May 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Email from Gemma Archer, Principal Project Officer, Governance, Integrity and Reform, Department of Communities on 25 August 2021.

<sup>67</sup> At least two of the organisations requested and received a second payment of the same amount.

<sup>68</sup> KWAC runs the Miriwoong Community Patrol Service, the Moongoong Sobering Up Shelter, programs for youth, men and family, and suicide prevention and National Disability Insurance Scheme and housing support services.

## Movement of Miriwoong People to their Homelands

The majority of people that Waringarri Corp supported to move from Kununurra were Miriwoong traditional owner families who left for outstation communities and blocks on their homelands. "Overcrowded housing was one factor, but so was the fear generally of COVID-19 as well as the opportunity to go and stay on country with the schools closed and so on." (KWAC: 2021). While a lot of people received assistance, some made their own way out of the town.

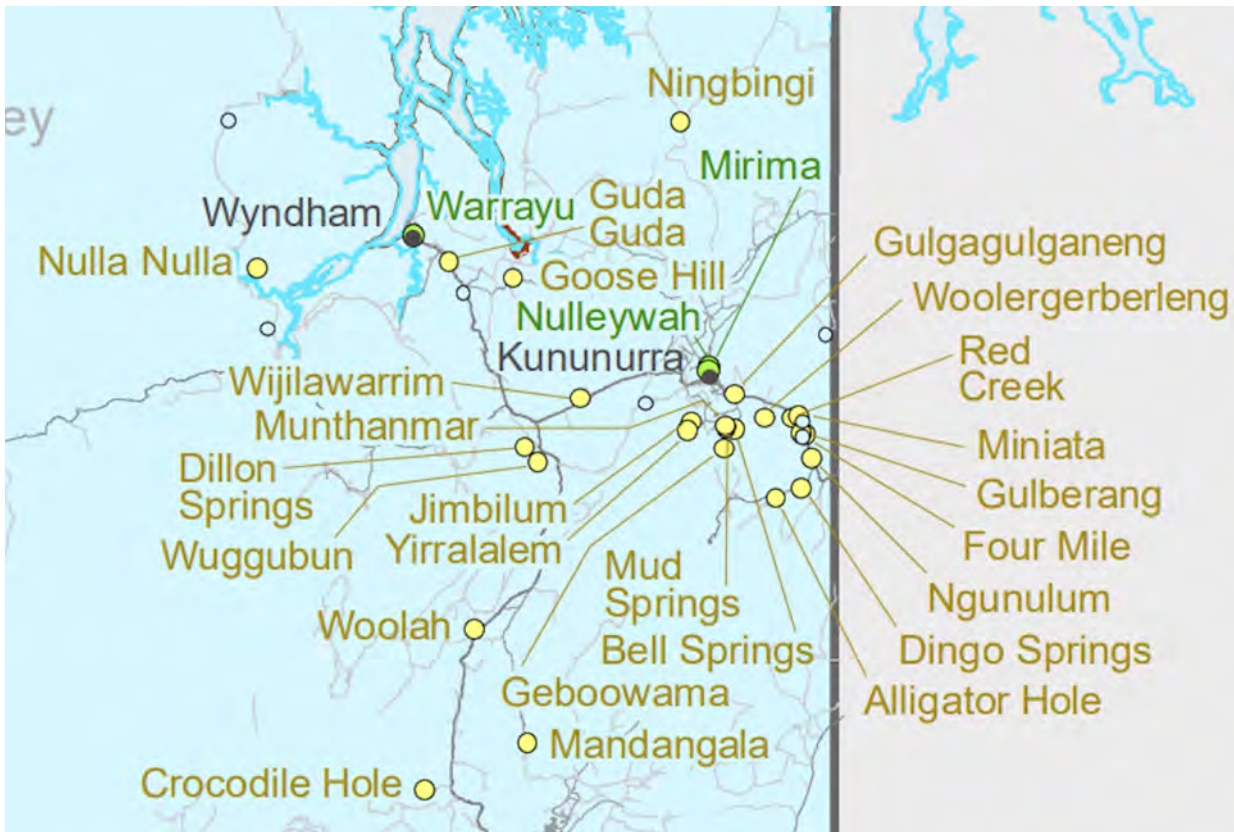


Figure 5: Map of Aboriginal Communities in the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire (Credit: WA Department of Planning, Land and Heritage)

A team of staff, including four of the Community Patrol drivers, transported people to their nominated destinations, provided fuel vouchers to those with their own cars, distributed food vouchers, and ran a regular delivery service of food and essential provisions out to those who had left town so they could remain away.

*At first, we provided some 300 purchase orders for [the local supermarket] and then we ended up buying vouchers from the other supermarket as well. We did not handle cash. We also distributed things through our Youth Program, boxes with hand sanitiser and so on. We provided fuel vouchers too. Initially, we imagined that these would be one-off payments but, as time wore on, and given we wanted people to stay out of the town for as long as they could, we got a second \$50,000 and did ongoing deliveries. People would call up and say, 'I've put in an order at Tuckerbox.' Once a fortnight for some families, I'd say. (KWAC: 2021)*

While staff were liaising with community members, they were spreading awareness of COVID and keeping safe, and calming people's fears.

The places that people requested to be taken varied greatly.



Some joined the residents of established communities and permanent blocks. Several of these settlements experienced such large influxes of town-dwellers that tensions developed over the shortages of room, with residents voicing their concerns about why KWAC was dropping more people there. Staff mediated these situations as best they could.

*It's very difficult for us because if people say that's their home, it's not up to us to say, 'No, it's not. I can't take you out there, sorry.'* (KWAC: 2021)

Other people went to one of several seasonal outstations with little to no infrastructure. Staff relied on their local knowledge and relationships in assessing the risks to their safety, but again there was a line that they could not cross.

*It's hard to take people out to places where they're living in tents, you do not feel good about that. So being able to say, 'I don't think you should do that,' would have been a lot easier.*

*The bottom line is that if someone says they want to go to a community, we can't say no to that. I understand that another organisation or agency can say that for these reasons people can't go, but as a community organisation in those circumstances, we couldn't say no.* (KWAC: 2021)

In these situations, the poor state of remote community infrastructure meant that people were coming in and out of town by necessity. Again, frontline staff were faced with weighing up the risks of helping them to do this or not, while taking care not to exacerbate an already tense and fearful situation.

*Some people at the outstation communities that weren't liveable would have to come into town to get running water and the basics.* (KWAC: 2021)

In such circumstances, KWAC advocated for support from the government, but this was not forthcoming.

*Where the communities weren't up to scratch, where no one had lived there for ages, we were getting requests for generators, water pumps, that kind of thing. And we would ask the Department of Communities, the local office here, about assisting people and they would always say 'no'.* (KWAC: 2021)

From time-to-time, staff encountered people who they had assisted to leave town but had chosen to return one or more times.

*A lot of people took the directions to stay in their communities very seriously. They wanted to move back there to self-isolate and we supported them as best we could. Then there were some who we took out one day and they'd be in town the next day. That was difficult, so our CEO laid down the law and said, 'We take you out, stay out but if we see you, we can't help you again.'* (KWAC:2021)

KWAC mediated many highly pressured situations and were able to resolve most but not all. In one case, "where we could not make the peace, we stopped giving assistance – no more funding and no more trips to that community." (KWAC:2021)

Most of the assistance provided to Aboriginal people through April and May was delivering essential supplies to Miriwoong communities and blocks. By June, these activities had come to an end as the government began relaxing the restrictions.



Staff from Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC), Kununurra (Credit: KWAC)

### Movements of People from Kununurra to Remote Communities elsewhere in the east Kimberley

The other main groups of Aboriginal people Waringarri Corp supported to relocate from Kununurra were those travelling to remote communities either in the north-west on charter flights or to the south-east by bus to Halls Creek, where most then went on to one of the four desert communities or to the West Kimberley.<sup>69</sup> While these numbers were significantly smaller than the Miriwoong ones, the costs for their travel were much higher, particularly for the seven or eight charter planes, and KWAC secured a second payment of \$50,000 from the Department of Communities.<sup>70</sup>

The operations across the greater East Kimberley saw KWAC working closely with a wide range of organisations, communities and businesses, many for the first time, including community councils and CEOs, town and remote community police, other Aboriginal community controlled organisations, and local airlines and bus companies.

With the travel restrictions between Kimberley shires in force from 2 April, the relocations to and from other LGAs stopped until May, at which time staff supported arrivals of people from Derby and Broome, and one person from Karratha, to return to Kununurra by bus, where they were required to self-isolate. Otherwise, there was little assisted movement within the Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire other than one charter to a North Kimberley community outside of the immediate vicinity of Kununurra.

<sup>69</sup> See Halls Creek case study, where Jungarni Jutiya AC then assisted most people onto buses to the desert communities of Ringer Soak, Balgo, Billiluna and Mulan with smaller numbers heading off to the Central and West Kimberley.

<sup>70</sup> After clarifying with the Department that the funds could be used to cover staff time as well, KWAC chose to allocate some to covering the costs of its frontline staff but drew a line with its office-based staff even though they were also dedicating a lot of time to COVID-related operational activities.



## Absence of local structures or networks for sharing information, supporting and working together

Throughout this time, KWAC had almost nothing to do with the Department of Communities other than intermittent communications with staff at the local office, mostly to seek clarity about how the funding could be used or, on occasions, to request support for communities and families who staff had assessed to be in need.

Early on, KWAC offered to assist the Department with the development of pandemic plans for Miriwoong communities which the WA government was wanting all remote Aboriginal communities to provide, but this was not accepted.

*We were happy to have input. We requested to have input, but the only information we were asked for was phone numbers for communities. And to that we said, 'Go to Miriwoong Gajerrong Corp, that information is for their communities.' (KWAC: 2021)*

While the capabilities of Aboriginal community organisations – including their detailed knowledge and understanding of communities – are acknowledged by government from time to time, nowhere was this evident in the local setting during those first months of the COVID crisis.

Only once did the Department request to meet KWAC about pandemic-related matters, and this was after the lockdown to discuss the proposed establishment of an emergency evacuation centre in Kununurra; however, it was not to share strategic information, but focussed on the specifics of the role of the Sobering Up Shelter in the process.

Similarly, KWAC worked without contact with any of the other emergency management agencies or groups in the LGA. While its CEO sat on the Kimberley Aboriginal COVID-19 Taskforce that was formed on 26 March, staff were unaware of any efforts to coordinate activities in the town or within the Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire area.

The organisation was not invited to share information or report on its activities through any of the communication structures and/or networks in Kununurra.

*This pandemic really shows that Kununurra doesn't have good local communications or networks. Government agencies – the Department of Communities and the police – knew that we were getting this money before we knew or had accepted it. Now, that's a pretty big breakdown of communication in my opinion. I feel that it's very dependent on staff, and we have a high turnover in staff in government, so maybe if we had someone who'd been here a bit longer who could have just called up our CEO and had a yarn with him, it would be very different. But as it is, they only contact us when they need something done such as the local evacuations. (KWAC: 2021)*

## On the frontline in the Fitzroy Valley

Marra Worra Worra (MWW) is the longest standing service delivery organisation in the Kimberley, with a presence dating back to the late 1970s. It was originally established to assist the outstation movement, wherein groups of Aboriginal people who were forcibly relocated to Fitzroy Crossing following the pastoral award decision of 1968, sought to return to traditional homelands and establish communities.

The history of MWW is important – even when in 2020 the original functions and values of the organisation have arguably been marginalised by the increasingly narrow, contract-focused demands of the government departments which fund MWW (see Hunt 2018).

We interviewed the MWW CEO and senior staff in early October 2020.

When COVID arrived early in 2020, MWW's three main contracts were across the Community Development Program, Housing management and maintenance, and employment. All of these contracts have strict contractual arrangements and deliverables. The vast majority of this work ceased, as CDP work-for-dole activities and all other mutual obligations were suspended on 23 March. CDP service providers were also instructed by the NIAA "...to not apply any job seeker compliance action, such as financial penalties, while the biosecurity arrangements announced by the Prime Minister on 20 March 2020 are in place." (Ken Wyatt: 2020)<sup>71</sup>

Most of MWW's housing team also ceased operations, although staff continued to source and accommodate private contractors (tradesmen) to provide emergency housing maintenance in the Valley communities. Some of these, however, including Muludja, Yiyili and Yakanarra, had locked their gates and were initially not allowing contractors in for any reason. (Interview with MWW CEO and staff: 2020)

<sup>71</sup> <https://ministers.pmc.gov.au/wyatt/2020/community-development-programme>

Contractors were accommodated in the workers camp in Fitzroy Crossing, a facility owned and managed by MWW with a 48-room capacity. This continued throughout 2020, despite considerable pressure being applied for the facility to be used instead as a quarantining/self-isolating centre. (Interview with MWW CEO and staff: 2020)

MWW's joint venture, Kimberley Regional Service Providers (KRSP), continued to provide essential services – waste management including sewerage, water supply and power/electricity – in the Valley via the Remote Areas Essential Services Program, which is funded by the Department of Communities. KRSP has been operating in remote Kimberley communities since 1998. Essential service workers were exempt from the closure of the Kimberley shire boundaries on 2 April. Many interviewees, including people at Muludja, Wangkatjungka and Yiyili, confirmed direct and very supportive contact with KRSP staff via telephone to ensure those essential workers remained socially distant when visiting communities.<sup>72</sup>

MWW sourced \$50,000 to support food dumps, the purchase of fresh killer<sup>73</sup> across the Valley and provided \$250 purchase orders for people to spend at their community store, or at the Tarunda supermarket in Fitzroy Crossing.

MWW staff reported assisting more than 180 people to return either to Fitzroy Crossing or to surrounding communities. This is 50 people more than the data provided to us by Department of Communities, which records 130 people being returned to either Fitzroy Crossing, or surrounding communities.

As well as assisting people to return from Perth, including children from boarding school elsewhere in Australia, MWW organised two bus trips into Broome to fetch Fitzroy Valley people and return them home. This occurred in addition to the efforts of Mamabulanjin resource agency and others in Broome, facilitated by an ex-CEO of MWW who in 2020 was resident in Broome.

MWW was clearly responding to the crisis in ways that made immediate sense to staff there, including doing food drops to town-based reserves and purchasing mattresses for all the returning family members.



Figure 6: Communities of the Fitzroy Valley  
Source Morphy 2010

<sup>72</sup> Our request for interviews with KRSP staff was declined by management because of strict protocols written into their Department of Communities contract around communicating with external parties.

<sup>73</sup> Bullock meat from local cattle stations.

## Fitzroy Crossing, and the Fitzroy Valley

*They say this sickness coming roun, dangerous one. We had a meeting here, to lock the gates, everyone come together. To think about this, he might wipe out the whole Indigenous race!*

*Not to be coming in with alcohol and drugs, really proper dangerous one. Can wipe out the whole people, all around! – Wangkatjungka Chairperson, 2021*

In this case study, we examine how Aboriginal organisations and families responded to threat of COVID-19 in the Central Kimberley town of Fitzroy Crossing, and surrounding remote communities. Early interviews were conducted with CEOs at Marra Worra Worra<sup>74</sup> and Nindlingarri<sup>75</sup>, two organisations with a long history of servicing the people and communities of the region, and of the town-based residents.

36 interviews were also conducted with individuals from a variety of communities throughout the Valley including: town-based reserves of Kurnangki, Burawa, DarlIngunaya, Junjuwa and Loanbun as well as more remote communities, including Wangkatjungka, Yiyili, Yakanarra, Muludja, Ngumpun and Moongardie.

The Fitzroy Valley is unique in the region in terms of the large number of smaller communities, outstations and medium size communities that characterise the area; more than half the 3000 plus Aboriginal people living in the Fitzroy Valley reside on communities outside of the town itself. Morphy's 2009 study of the population of the Valley, which remains the most accurate count<sup>76</sup> we have for the area, enumerated around 1250 Aboriginal people living in the TBRs and within the townsite (200 – 250) of Fitzroy Crossing itself. (Morphy 2010)

Morphy surveyed 40 communities, both town-based reserves and more remote communities, in her 2009 survey. 6 of these communities are now designated self-managing<sup>77</sup> (according to data provided by Department of Communities to the Auditor General's Department in 2021 (WA Auditor General 2021) p 37-38, which is a euphemistic way of saying that they are at the very bottom of the queue in terms of service provision.

There are now 58 'self-managing' communities across the Kimberley, the largest by a factor of more than five in the state of WA.

A number of these very small communities proved vital havens for families wanting to stay away from larger communities and towns:

*For us mob, all these little remote communities, we really battling for shelter, if a big thing come like that again, I'd like to see govt build a shelter for us, because it's the only safest place, small people (ie less people) ... these places gottem names, they gottem stories, we are back on our homelands, we rather have people here. These places mean something to us, they gottem dreamtime story, we won't move, these places are our country, you know. (Barrawooga 2021)*

A number of communities closer to Fitzroy Crossing are classified as town-based reserves (TBRs). The distinction is important in the context of the pandemic response. While remote communities came under very strong restrictions around movement of people in and out, TBRs and town-based Aboriginal people did not. Not being qualified as 'remote communities', the residents of these communities were also not eligible for the same financial inducements as Aboriginal people living further out of town in 'remotes'.

The residents of TBRs were also not required to provide a pandemic plan – although a senior official in Department of Premier and Cabinet reported to the WA Parliament that a number did (ref to submission Kate Alderton). Aboriginal people living in towns also did not provide pandemic plans, nor did they have input into those that were presumably being prepared on their behalf.

Plans that were completed for regional centres in the Kimberley were therefore tenure blind. That is, they did not account for the presence of the very poor and/or overcrowded living conditions of Aboriginal people on town-based reserves, nor of people living within the towns themselves.

It also appears that while people on remote communities were to be responsible for pandemic planning themselves, and self-reliance was encouraged, Aboriginal people in towns and TBRs were neither responsible, nor involved, in the pandemic response. For pandemic planning purposes, their Aboriginality was deemed irrelevant.

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.mww.org.au/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.nindlingarri.org.au/>

<sup>76</sup> "At the 2016 census, it is estimated (by the ABS) that as much as 28% of the Aboriginal population of the East Kimberley was not enumerated (ABS 2017)." (Taylor 2020: 16)

<sup>77</sup> "There are no minimum service levels for self-managed communities. These are very small communities, normally with a population of 10–15 people and 3–5 dwellings, that may not be continuously inhabited. Self-managed communities are serviced less frequently and, unlike larger communities, at variable intervals." (AG report 2021:14)

This fact is remarkable given the elevated and related risk factors relating to age and chronic health conditions, overcrowding and failing infrastructure that exist in these areas, and amongst these people.

While we were assured that these populations were included in the pandemic planning that was occurring at a Shire level, we know that TBRs legally are still the responsibility of the Aboriginal Lands Trust; provision of adequate housing, or the state of essential infrastructure, has never been the responsibility of local government Shires in the Kimberley.<sup>78</sup>

When we asked senior Aboriginal people in Fitzroy Crossing who they understood was involved in planning for the town, and for town-based Aboriginal people, we repeatedly got this kind of response: "Everything was so secretive and filtered by layers of Government wanting to protect themselves from criticism that no one knew what was happening." Or this "Nothing was done about town-based communities." So while Shire and relevant emergency management committees may well have had particular plans in place to accommodate these high risk areas in and around regional centres in the Kimberley, it would appear that Aboriginal people were not made aware of these plans, nor were they included in their development.

Morphy's 2009 study indicated that a population of around 1250 Aboriginal people resided in both the Fitzroy Crossing town site and seven TBRs in 2009. That number was likely to be significantly greater in 2020.

That these areas are designated as TBRs is about the only thing they have in common, apart from the fact that they remain under the jurisdiction of the Aboriginal Lands Trust, and are distinctive in terms of land tenure.<sup>79</sup> They range in population size from Junjuwa (300+) to Loanbun/Parukupan (40+) and Darlungunaya (50+). These areas are not designated 'remote' and so do not receive services under the WA government's Remote Essential and Municipal Services program. They often struggle, despite being very close to town, to receive basic services such as a reliable water supply, electricity and road maintenance, (see for example Parke 2018) and some become very difficult to access during the wet season. In the 2021 wet season for example, Bungardi required emergency food drops via helicopter, despite being only 9 kilometres from the centre of town.

### Pandemic planning for remote Fitzroy Valley communities

Interviews were conducted with residents throughout the communities of Muludja, Yakanarra, Yiyili, Wangkatjungka, Moongardie, Barrowooga and Ngumpan. The majority of these interviews were with Aboriginal residents of these communities, although the Principals of two independent community schools – at Yakanarra and at Yiyili – were also interviewed.

Interestingly, while Pandemic Plans were reportedly compiled, mostly by MWW, and submitted to Department of Communities by Nindilingarri staff, community level people seemed unaware of them, or of the "plan for action" they contained.

The long presence of MWW as a resource agency in the Fitzroy Valley, combined with the fact that MWW had the Housing Management Authority contract for the region, meant that it was in a good position to provide Department of Communities with the information required for remote community pandemic plans.

The other reality is that the erosion of smaller organisations throughout a region such as the Fitzroy Valley<sup>80</sup> has meant that there no longer exists governance or administrative capacity in most remote communities; there is often no "office" to speak of, and no formal structure through which such information might be gathered and communicated to government officials.

Community meetings of course were suspended during the pandemic, and people interviewed voiced concerns that these proper means of receiving information from government, and providing a considered community response, were no longer available to them:

*We didn't have a meeting with govt, that rule, we never gettim from them...like there wasn't any chairman... we shoulda had meeting with them. Talk about this covid. But they just turned up suddenly, without letting anybody know. (Wangkatjungka 2021)*

<sup>78</sup> "Town Based Reserves / communities such as those in Broome and Fitzroy Crossing are not covered by the directions (which basically restrict travel into remotes) as they are parts of a town and in the case of Fitzroy a significant part of the town. *Though Town based Reserves / Communities are outside the formal scope of RAC-MU we try as much as possible to keep an eye on them and if issues come up we will try to respond.*" Email from Peter Facey, Assistant Director Operations – North (East and West Kimberley), Remote Aboriginal Communities – Mobilisation Unit, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 18 Feb 2021.

<sup>79</sup> "There are an estimated 12,000 people living on the ALT estate (in WA) in 142 permanent settlements, ranging from those with large populations comparative to regional towns, to small family settlements." (ref DPLH Annual Report 2020-2021, p 24)

<sup>80</sup> See Thorburn (2017: 10) : The erosion of organisational diversity occurred via a process of 'administrative rationalisation', which saw Community Development and Employment Projects and other programs – which had formed the administrative base for many small entities – centralised to larger subregional organisations.



While remote community residents might (or might not have) have had access to social media and internet platforms, and may have been able to read/listen/view material relating to the pandemic response in other parts of Australia, it is apparent that many residents were at best peripherally aware of the plans in their own localities.

### Remote community life during 2020 lockdown

Yiyili is located within the shire of Halls Creek, although it is geographically closer to Fitzroy Crossing, and has historically been serviced by agencies from within the town Fitzroy Crossing.

Residents at Yiyili reported that it was easy to go for shopping in either Fitzroy Crossing or in Halls Creek. Police checkpoints were recording numbers of people in the car, and where they were heading. (Moongardie 2021)

Families pooled resources and tried to send only one person to town to buy stores on behalf of groups of families. (Yiyili 2021)



Closed gate at Yiyili community, sourced from community Facebook page, 2020.

As with the remote communities of Wangkatjunkga, Ngumpan, and Barrawooga, the community of Yiyili locked the gate on the road into the community, and a sign was put up to warn visitors not to come in.

*The hard one, was people were coming in and out of communities and community people saying, well, I can't say no to family, even if they're coming from Kununurra, which we know, we had COVID there... You know it was just sort of setting those rules, I mean like in any community, some people took it seriously, some people didn't. (Yiyili 2021)*

Yiyili residents repeatedly mentioned the crucial role of the community school – in providing food, communications, and dividing up teachers to provide educational support to each of the smaller communities:

*...they give us box full of tucker during that time, vegetable and all. School they bin give us tools, ax, hose, kimbies and toys, Majorie been help them teach all the kids you know, the school they packed all the stuff up for us mob and sent it out here. (Moongardie 2021)*

Feedback on the impact of the COVID supplement was varied, though it was mostly positive:

*...the good part was that people had food. They didn't have to go into town and stuff and they been stay in one place (Yiyili 2021)*

*That money was big help, for mungardi (food), rego for car, fuel...Hunting...? Yeah we been go. All the kids been just gone around to the community aye*

*all the kid. And everybody can say what he warrumba time now, rainy season, fishing, turkey, yeah kept gone shooting. You know taking but them for kangaroo looking and turkey (Yiyili 2021)*

Negative impacts were also reported however, and people expressed worry, not only that some members of the community were not spending the extra income responsibly, but in doing so were increasing the vulnerability of everyone to the spread of the virus:

*The bad part about it was they had a lot of money you know and they had to take off for drinking and and gunja...*

*...those people who gottem problem with alcohol and drug, they been slipping in and out of Fitzroy and Halls Creek...We been frightened la them.*

*...and we just off the road here see. They can walk, they don't have to have a car. Just go to the turn off and hitch a ride (they can get into town...) the black market been come in too you know... (Yiyili 2021)*

While most interviewees did not comment on problems with drug and alcohol use, others including people from Wangkatjungka made the point, for some individuals and families, the extra income created more problems than it solved:

*Community people, made 'em break the rules, that government support money. That wasn't right.*

*Some people didn't take it seriously, they just used that money wrong way. They bin use that money for alcohol and drugs and that wasn't right. Police never do anything. Didn't stop people bringing all that grog, to Wangkatjungka. It bin fuck everybody.*

*Some kids bin sniffing petrol, no enjoyment, nothing. Right out Wangkatjungka, Noonkanbah. We bin running around stopping all the kid, we bin trying to save lives for kids. It created problems. We were standing right in that gate. Trying to stop them.*

*Government shoulda handed out with basic card. They bin use that money wrong way. It bin create a lot of problem here.*

*We stay la community, supporting our family. There was more problem here then before COVID. All around these little community.<sup>81</sup> (Wangkatjungka 2021)*

Others however reported that the lockdown provided an opportunity for countrymen to get away from town, and to 'dry out', to stop drinking:

*Time on country – family been come back to that one community, like remote community, from Derby, Broome, Halls Creek. That community like a safe zone. Away from all those town people, cut down on that drinking side. Everything was all good, at that time. Some people come from town to take shelter here. They out here on country, they dry out. Made them feel good. Didn't worry about drinking. (Ngumpan 2021)*

The vast majority of people reported responsible spending of the COVID supplement, on food, household goods and furniture, gardening materials and toys for children. These reports were supported by staff at both the hardware store in Fitzroy Crossing and the IGA Manager at Tarunda who confirmed that the month of April 2020 was their biggest incomes yet. Other community stores across the Kimberley reported similarly significant increases in income.

<sup>81</sup> One media report at the time also: COVID-19 cash linked to booze binges, violence in northern WA <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-12/covid-payments-linked-to-violence-in-kimberley/12443220>



### Confused messaging: Stay home/Go bush!!

The pandemic response, arrived at within an extremely short timeframe by government officials based in Perth, was interpreted variously by people living in the Fitzroy Valley – but the early messaging around the safest place for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley was confusing indeed.

Remote-living Aboriginal people were at greater risk from COVID-19, for the simple logistical reality of being further from clinical help in terms of a hospital. However, beyond access to a clinic, people living in TBRs, with precisely the same issues as overcrowding, chronic disease and failing infrastructure, would have been at equally high risk of both contracting and spreading the virus.

Our observation is that there were two key variables in how town and town-based Aboriginal families chose to respond to the threat of COVID-19, particularly in the Fitzroy Valley. The first of these was car ownership. The second – and clearly related – variable was access to traditional country with some minimal, but essential, infrastructure, especially potable water.

Where both of these variables coincided, and almost without exception, people vacated houses in town and on TBRs and returned to country.

This response was at odds with the official WA government instructions, which shifted from a 'return to country' directive, to the far more nuanced and specific message – "if you have a house somewhere, we will help you to get back." One senior government official observed that it was a fine line the Department of Communities was treading at the time, and that Aboriginal people themselves were left to weigh up the risks of returning to country and/or remote outstations versus staying in a house in town. (Fischer 2020) This same official agreed that the messaging at the time had gotten confused, and people had interpreted it as a "go back to country" directive, but that had "...never been the intention of government",

Presumptions around the meanings of "town", "community" and "home" were similarly evident in advice being circulated via the Kimberley Bulletin, which was compiled by BBY, KAMSC and Empowered Communities (see example from March 27):

#### **"Repatriation (getting home ready for isolation)**

*Right now, Aboriginal people are safest in their home community, not in town. Therefore, the State Government is supporting community members to return to their community. Community members who are currently in other towns or regions should return home where possible. There will be no cost to residents for this travel and they will be supported to obtain food and supplies for their return.*

*The Aboriginal Community Connectors Program will be helping to do this and ensuring that anyone showing signs of illness will be linked to relevant health services. People in the Kimberley are asked to go home to prepare for isolation." (See Appendix 8 for email sent out from Department of communities on March 23 2020)*

Presumptions that are apparent in this advice include that your "home community" is NOT in a town, that "town" is NOT a safe place to be, that you are better off to leave "town" and return to your community.

Our interviews can confirm that ~ 40 people whose "homes" were in town-based reserves in Fitzroy Crossing relocated to the "self-managed" community of Galamunda, a small pastoral lease excision on Leopold Downs which has not had residents in over 10 years, and upwards of 60 people, similarly from town-based reserves and the town itself, relocated to another small lease on the same station which was essentially a holiday/mustering camp. Both places have running water and very basic ablution facilities.

The flipside of this experience were the people who recounted being 'stuck' in town, because of a lack of vehicle. All agreed that had they had the option, they would have left town and headed either to outstations, or to more remote communities where their countrymen resided, such as Wangkatjungka.

These actions comply with government directives contained within the pandemic plan templates, in particular the call for self-reliance. What the government may have missed however is the different ways that a directive to return 'home' would be interpreted. Also, that the conception of 'self' – that Aboriginal families would prioritise the collective self, rather than "the household" or "the home", and according to people's own cultural logic, would interpret "home" as homelands.<sup>82</sup>

## On the frontline: ACCOs in the Fitzroy Valley

Both the Marra Worra Worra (MWW) CEO and the Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service (NCHS) CEO in Fitzroy Crossing reported that they were called upon repeatedly to provide information to government agencies, including the WA Police and the Department of Health, across a whole range of domains. This information included the contact details for remote communities across the Fitzroy Valley.

Staff at Nindilingarri – an entity that delivers primary health and environmental health services across the Fitzroy Valley – also worked hard in the lead up to, and then during, the 2020 COVID lockdown. All interviewees across the Valley, including those who live in town, reported on Nindilingarri staff visiting their communities, and providing information, cleaning equipment, and soap or hand sanitiser. Nindilingarri also performed the crucial role of liaising between the Fitzroy Crossing hospital, and residents across the region, making sure that medications were delivered to people who needed them. They also managed flu injections – and in 2020 achieved the highest level of flu vaccinations in the Kimberley – and looked after an estimated 40 women across the Fitzroy Valley who were pregnant at the time of the lockdown. (Nindilingarri CEO 2020)

It is evident that the grass roots understanding of the entirety of the Fitzroy Valley was essential for NCHS to be able to provide this service. An outside entity – including WACHS – would have been unaware for example of the numbers of people (or the location) camping at very small outstations on Leopold Downs. Both of these sites were visited by Nindilingarri staff. “Nindi’s success came through our networks, that we are a trusted organisation, through family and kinship. Trusted source of information for people. Key is to work with local organisations.” (Nindilingarri CEO 2020)

## A sense of liberation and connection: “COVID was a blessing in disguise”

Many Fitzroy Crossing residents who would normally be based in town, seized the opportunities presented in the 2020 lockdown – opportunities manifested in increased income, and decreased requirements to work, or to meet CDP obligations – and returned to homelands. The full extent of this in terms of numbers is impossible to quantify. But as mentioned above, we know that around 100 people had decamped to areas on Leopold Downs station, a station that is Aboriginal-owned and has very good river frontage and plenty of freshwater springs.

June Oscar, Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner was one of these people, and wrote at length in the media about how valuable the experience was for her extended family. (Oscar 2020)

“Families chose, and most importantly, were able to move to outstations and bush camps. Surrounded by the wealth of our Country, culture and our ancestors, people have had the time to reconnect, tell stories, hunt, and practise and transfer our knowledge between young and old. This engagement has reinvigorated discussions about Country- and culture-based ways of living.” (Oscar 2020) p 14

Oscar’s experience was reiterated by many people who had the opportunity to return to country with extended family. We asked one young woman, normally resident on a town-based reserve near Fitzroy Crossing, what her experience was of spending time ‘out bush’ during the 2020 lockdown:

*It was great. Before that lockdown, I didn’t even know what biriyali<sup>83</sup> was... so I learnt a lot about who I am and where I’m from. I learnt a lot about culture, and what it’s like to live on country. It was amazing to spend all that time out bush because without that lockdown, we wouldn’t have got that chance. It was really fun for me. And I loved learning about culture, and going to places that I would have never went to otherwise. Living off the land, just living with the land, it was just amazing, it meant a lot to me, to stay out there for that three months.*

*She (one elder) taught us about that emu nest, that top of the hill, the two eggs, the story about that. That billabong.*

*We got heaps of turkeys, lots of practice, horse riding nearly every morning. Races to the gate and back.*

<sup>82</sup> Government departments confusing/conflating a dwelling with ‘home’ and ‘a family unit’ is a common cultural misstep in remote Aboriginal community settings. See Morphy, F. (2006). Uncontained subjects: ‘Population’ and ‘household’ in remote Aboriginal Australia. APA.

*Where is the household (if defined in terms of commensality) that encompasses more than one dwelling? Where are the clusters of dwellings that together anchor larger subsets of an extended family? Where are the homelands communities, in which everybody, ultimately, is related to everybody else in some way, and which function as a single ‘household’ when it comes to the distribution of meat from large game such as turtles and dugong?*

<sup>83</sup> The scented timber used for ceremonial and ‘smoking’ ceremonies.



*Some people had tents, lots of dongas<sup>84</sup>. Good family time, around the fire in the morning and at night, kids never got bored, they didn't want to come back to town!! Duck stealing your toast off the fire hahaha!! (Darlungunaya 2021)*

At Warringarri, on Leopold Downs, dozens of extended family members camped together. Systems were quickly established to minimise travel to the towns of either Fitzroy Crossing or Derby, and the wellbeing of everyone, mental and physical, benefited from being out there:

*We had medical supplies at camp, we didn't want to have to travel to town for medicine.*

*People were too scared to come to town; Fitzroy was like a ghost town.*

*Bush medicines were on the go, boiling up bush medicines. People were eating really well, really good diet.*

*Kids came out, there was no gunja. None out on the stock camp. Because of travel restrictions, no gunja was getting in anyway. All that mob that had gunja craving, we just replaced it with food and snacks and distractions. Fruit. Lots to do, and people just got so healthy, emotionally and socially.*

*Emotional security, knowing where they fit, having that reinforced every day, no one stressed out. Where their responsibility was, their sense of belonging reinforced in a consistent way. Reinforced by activities, by being on country and by being told stories about pastoral history and cultural knowledge for country. (Warringarri 2021)*

For these people, it was a productive time and an empowering time:

*They were hunting, fishing, working hard, everyone pitched in with mustering time. Getting stock yards set up etc.*

*People were able to get killer, to fish. Some people saw country they had never seen before, only heard about.*

*All the families got involved in fire management work too, some got paid for that work.*

*Break from constant meetings, constant advocacy just to keep the wheels on of life, that's normal in Fitzroy Crossing. We refused to go to meetings.*

*People just refused to come in (to town), so as to protect family, but it was respite from the humbug.*

*It was an empowering moment, people took charge, took responsibility. (Warringarri 2021)*



*Hunting near Warringarri stock camp, Leopold Downs.*

<sup>84</sup> A 'donga' is a demountable building.

Scale is an important consideration here, and much has been written and commented on over decades about the scales at which Aboriginal authority functions best. (See Janet Hunt 2008) In her 2010 population study of the Fitzroy Valley, Morphy (2010: 55) observed that "...core individuals prefer to live in small communities consisting of members of their extended family, where a kin-based system of governance functions effectively."

These kinds of dynamics – where family groups sought to return to country to reinvigorate more traditional authority structures – were one of the key drivers for the outstation movement in the Fitzroy Valley in the mid-1980s.

Larger communities were reporting as struggling with these issues, including Balgo (See Page 50 -57) and Noonkanbah: "Some smaller families were able to move, get onto country. But others, big communities like Noonkanbah, which went up to 500 people, returning people caused conflict." (Nindilingarri CEO 2020)

### Vehicle ownership & access: a crucial advantage

"To have a car, one might say, is to find out how many relatives one has." (Myers 1988)

There is an enormous gap in terms of car ownership between households with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents versus non-Indigenous households in the Kimberley.

From data collected during the 2016 Census, at a Kimberley level, more than a third of all households with Aboriginal residents had no motor vehicle. For non-Indigenous households, only 2.4% had no vehicle.

Surprisingly, those areas of the Kimberley that are more remote have even lower vehicle access at the household level. The importance for Aboriginal people of owning or being able to access a vehicle – especially during a pandemic – was repeatedly made clear during interviews with Aboriginal people throughout the Fitzroy Valley.

In the ABS Indigenous Areas of Fitzroy Crossing and Fitzroy River, 53% of households with Aboriginal residents had no motor vehicles.<sup>85</sup>

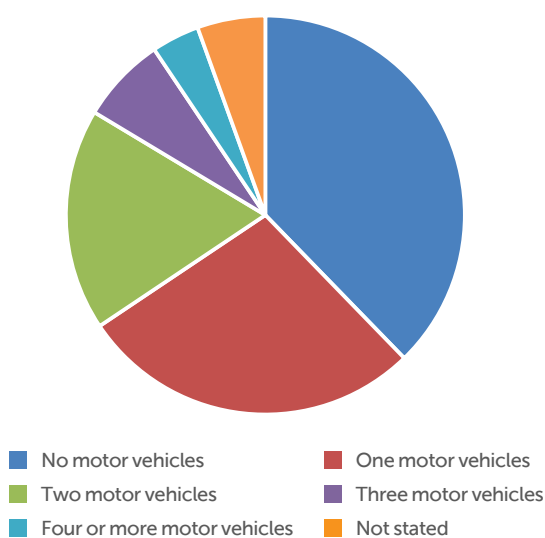


Figure 7: Car ownership, households with ATSI person(s), Census of Population and Housing 2016

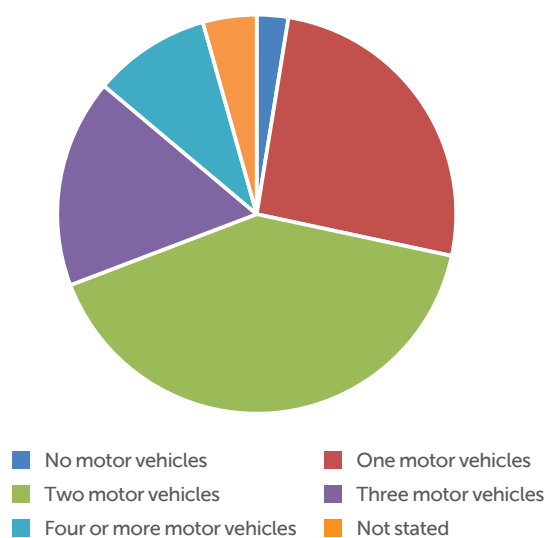


Figure 8: Car ownership, non-Indigenous households, Census of Population and Housing 2016

<sup>85</sup> Census data being collected during 2021 will likely reflect increased levels of car ownership in these kinds of areas; unfortunately, such data will not be made available until 2022.



In the more remote parts and communities of the Kimberley, and regional towns, every second household that has Indigenous residents has no access to motor vehicle.

The implications of this reality for a pandemic lockdown relate to:

- The amount of stores/provisions a household can access and transport, often by foot.
- The likelihood that households without cars will try to access family nearby that do have a vehicle, especially for shopping or hunting
- The pressure this puts on those households that do have a vehicle to assist other members of the family nearby
- The associated costs (fuel and vehicle maintenance) of having a vehicle which is likely to be intensively used by extended family
- The data collected by the ABS tells us about vehicles per household – but not vehicles per person. Given the overcrowding that characterises Indigenous households across the region, it is likely that the ratio of Aboriginal people to vehicles is much higher than what the household ratio suggests.<sup>86</sup>

We would also make the observation that, despite considerable lobbying over the years, the public transport options in towns such as Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek, are minimal.

The taxi service in Fitzroy Crossing – where there are no other public transport options, and a number of TBRs are 5 or more kilometres from the supermarket – reportedly did a roaring trade during the 2020 lockdown. Whether taxis are a safe option during the COVID-19 pandemic is a moot point. But many residents of town-based reserves around Fitzroy Crossing interviewed for this research made the observation that the number of private vehicles available to them to ‘hitch a ride to town’ decreased dramatically during the 2020 lockdown, presumably as a majority of these vehicles had ‘gone bush’.

Marra Worra Worra was also reportedly assisting people with shopping trips to town and back. There were also other ad hoc reports of food drops from organisations such as MWW, but there was no discernible systematic approach to the town, or TBRs, as a whole, and most families had to find their own way to and from the store.

The only mechanical workshop in Fitzroy Crossing reported their busiest period ever: “People were buying second hand cars and bringing them in here, they were able to pay for us to fix their cars that had been sitting in the holding yard for 6 months or more, they were getting new tyres, they were getting their own cars fixed up.” The mechanic stated that his workload went ‘through the roof’ after the Shire borders closed, because people could no longer travel to Broome to access mechanical workshops, or to buy cars or new tyres.

As with other interviewees throughout the region, he also stated that the number of Aboriginal people accessing superannuation was “astronomical”, and that many people he knew used their super to purchase vehicles, or to register or fix up those they already owned. (See page 30)

Many people interviewed commented that unroadworthy cars were being sold to Aboriginal people who were desperate for a vehicle.

The state of roads into and out of remote communities was also commented on by residents of remote communities, and delayed food deliveries via truck in two instances – to Wankgatjunga and to Noonkanbah – because in both cases the dirt roads to these two large communities were in such a state of disrepair that a truck carrying essential food items could not get through.

The matter of who is responsible for the maintenance of roads into and out of remote communities in the Kimberley has been a political hot potato for many years now, and a year after the COVID lockdown in the Kimberley, remains unresolved.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> 6,316 households across the region with Aboriginal/TL residents and one or more motorcars for a total population of 14,299 people. For the non-Indigenous population of 20,065 people, more than 30,000 vehicles were recorded.

<sup>87</sup> “Responsibility for the Kimberley’s network of roads is split between Main Roads WA, local shires and remote communities. In the event of extensive flood damage during the wet season, it is up to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to distribute funds for road repair from the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement.” Barry, H., et al. (2021). Funding ‘debacle’ leaves Kimberley communities isolated in wet season with damaged roads. ABC Kimberley.

## Social distancing in overcrowded dwellings?

A number of people interviewed throughout the Fitzroy Valley questioned the capacity of people living in overcrowded circumstances to apply social distancing guidelines. As outlined in the introduction, data relating to the extent of overcrowding across the region has not been routinely collected since 2006.

However, other indicators, such as the persistent high incidence of acute rheumatic fever across the region including two increases warranting public health alerts (see clinical alerts dated March 2021 and 19 Oct 2021) suggest that the living conditions of Aboriginal people due to inadequate social housing options and repairs remain very poor.

Aboriginal people across the region were well aware of the impossibility of social distancing in many households:

*And so the idea of collecting all of our vulnerable people in Broome and sending them back to a hub of where, you know, where other vulnerable people are...made no sense to me. And also you're already impacting on overcrowded, housing, so if you took everyone from every community and put them back, we've already got overcrowded houses, you're crowding more people into a smaller thing.*

*You're then creating issues – if you have a lot of people coming back, if you've got a busload of people coming back into a community, you've got food issues, then, you can't force people to stay in their communities... they're going to have to drive into town more to get more food from town because the shop will be empty.*

*You know, so it was a thrown together plan, that that didn't make sense to me, and, and I think that we're extremely lucky that in these areas that we're able to pretty much contain COVID early days (Yiyili 2021)*

In the WA government's submission to the Commonwealth to withdraw from the Commonwealth Biosecurity Act, tabled on 29 May 2020, it is clear that these kinds of considerations were at play in the decision to keep remote communities 'closed' while opening up the rest of the state:

*The COVID-19 Return to Community Program has led to significant population increases in remote communities. This has contribution (sic) to occupation of temporary housing and overcrowding in existing dwellings. Consequently, the capacity to isolate is significantly challenged in remote communities. Anecdotal evidence coming from nursing staff at Kimberley based primary health clinics is that they are seeing an increase in skin and enteric related presentations attributed to COVID-19 related overcrowding and poor environmental health conditions in affected homes.*

*Food security is compromised due to overcrowding and community population increases. Remote community stores (if present) have limited storage capacity. Environmental health service providers have been asked to provide assistance with food supply to vulnerable persons/communities in the event that food security is a significant issue. This request from DoC has to date not eventuated into a response or action but there is capacity to step in if required." (Government of Western Australia 29 May 2020.)*

Given the intense pressure on motor vehicles outlined above, consideration might also be warranted as to advising remote community and town-based people on vehicle use. For example, the "social bubble" conceptualised by the household probably should have been extended to motorcars, so that communities or groups of families contained themselves to a designated motorcar.

We understand that as the pandemic progressed in 2020, the possibility of isolating individuals within households in remote communities was deemed entirely unrealistic, and it was accepted that should an outbreak occur in a remote community, the entire community would be locked down. (Fischer 2020)

We found no evidence however that this approach was understood by residents of remote communities in the Fitzroy Valley – who in interviews repeatedly referred to the lack of space for any individual to self-isolate in their community.



## Balgo and Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation

The large remote community of Balgo has a petrol station, supermarket, Catholic parish, Luurnpa Catholic School (K–10) and a multi-function police station<sup>88</sup>. It also has a remote health centre, overseen by KAMSC.

Balgo was selected for inclusion as a case study in this report for a number of reasons. These included that Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation put together a very comprehensive Pandemic Plan (some 68 pages) as per WA Department of Communities request in late March – the first version of the Balgo Pandemic Plan was provided to WA Government on April 15, 2020.

Crucially, Balgo was an anomaly in terms of the WA government response to the threat of COVID. While categorised as a 'remote community' under the WA government's remote Aboriginal Community Directions (See Appendix 10), Balgo is one of the largest remote communities in the Kimberley – although the actual, or official, or even estimated, population of Balgo is a moot point.

The 2016 ABS Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016) recorded 359 people, of whom 81.6% were Aboriginal.<sup>89</sup>

The 2016 population count is wildly at odds however, both with Census counts prior to 2016, and with the population figures held by the Clinic in Balgo and provided to Wirrimanu AC for use in the Pandemic Plan, which estimated there to be 700 people in the community in April 2020.<sup>90</sup>

Department of Communities' Property Tenancy Management System (PTMS) from 2019 estimated there were 289 Aboriginal people in Balgo. (WA Department of Planning and Commission. 2004) updated June 2020) This same report states that: "Based on the April 2019 air photo, it is estimated that there is a total of 132 residential dwellings within the community. Other outbuildings and transportable buildings are also present in the community. It is unknown how many of these dwellings are occupied. The Department of Communities (Housing) provides property and tenancy management services under a Housing Management Agreement (HMA) to 100 residential houses in the Balgo community (PTMS, 2019). The type and current condition of the dwellings is unknown."

In Taylor's 2020 report, again referring to the most recent Census data, he noted 48 dwellings<sup>91</sup> with an estimated population of 370 – and an occupancy rate of 7.7 people. This occupancy rate would have doubled with ~ 700 people in the community.

Of this total, the clinic also added to the pandemic plan that there were 60 people aged 50 years and over on a chronic disease care plan, and 185 people aged 49 years and under on a chronic disease plan. In other words, 35% of the population of Balgo were suffering from chronic health conditions, according to data held by the clinic.

Balgo is also noteworthy, compared to the wider Aboriginal population, for the number of older residents – the median age recorded in the 2016 Census was 31, significantly higher than for most remote Aboriginal communities in the region, and certainly high for a community with no aged care centre.<sup>92</sup> The Pandemic Plan recorded 82 people aged over 50 in Balgo – the nominated high risk age category at the time for Aboriginal people.

In our Introduction, we noted that the dearth of population data was of major concern. In this example here, it is clear that available data was wildly variable. Even with a population which is highly mobile, there should be consistency in the data on, for example, the size and number of habitable houses.

It is also possible to develop population profiles for a region that give indications of service populations, a concept that seems highly applicable in the context of a pandemic.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Multi Function Police Stations service all police and judiciary needs. The buildings include a charge room, two cells, a small court room, administration office for court staff, a room for the officer in charge and interview rooms.

<sup>89</sup> Note however Taylor's 2020 proposition that the 2016 Census count in Balgo did not reflect a falling population (from 410 Aboriginal usual residence in 2006 to 289 in 2016) but rather an inaccurate Census count (Taylor 2020).

<sup>90</sup> This figure includes those approximately 50 people returned via the return to community Program funded by WA Department of Communities, and 50 non-Indigenous staff.

<sup>91</sup> Other sources quote a greater number of dwellings in Balgo, though they are not separating out Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households.

<sup>92</sup> While a Census has been underway in 2021, new population estimates won't be finalised until 2023.

<sup>93</sup> A number of demographers have conducted comprehensive populations survey of Aboriginal populations which account for mobility, see for example Morphy (2010) and Prout and Yap (2010)

### Proximity to the Northern Territory border, and a highly mobile population

The community of Balgo is in the Shire of Halls Creek, and is approximately 120 km from the Northern Territory border via the Tanami Road, with the nearest Aboriginal settlements being Mulan (50km west) and Billiluna (110km north west by road). It is 275km to the nearest town of Halls Creek.

Culturally, Balgo people have links to both the Great Sandy Desert and the Tanami Desert. The dominant Indigenous language groups are Walmatjarri, Kukatja and Jaru, while Ngarti, Warlpiri, Pintupi are also spoken/used. Crucially for this study, the population at Balgo have significant links into the Northern Territory, especially the communities of Lajamanu and Yuendumu, and places like Kiwikarra in the Gibson Desert, in the Ngaanyatjarra Shire, 500 kms to the south.<sup>94</sup> Anthropologists have been observing the vast networks and mobility of people connected with Balgo for decades, and remark that these levels of mobility underpin the cultural vitality of desert peoples whose nodes of residence include the community of Balgo. Mobility, as far as anthropologists are concerned, is a noteworthy characteristic of desert peoples from this part of Australia.

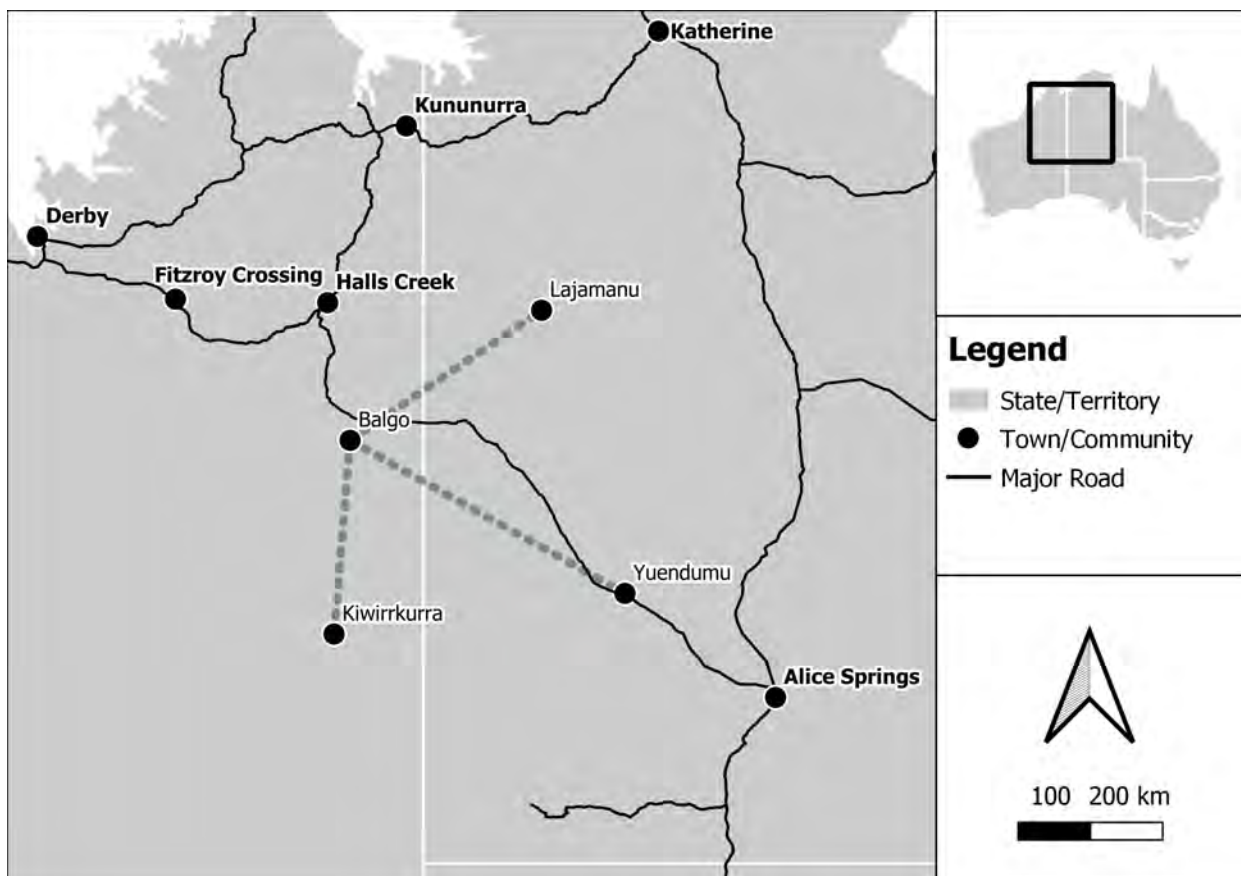


Figure 9: Cultural links into the remote community of Balgo

<sup>94</sup> Poirie (2014); See also Peterson (2004)



Anecdotally, some of this movement of people continued unabated throughout 2020, despite the Shire border lockdowns, and the WA state/Northern Territory border closure. There are remote roads that cross the NT border, in addition to the Tanami Road. Police were reporting to be patrolling these roads then, but the remoteness of the region and the impracticality of having roadblocks patrolled throughout the entire lockdown meant that people from over the border could – and did – easily enter WA, and return to the NT.

People travelling in from these communities in the Northern Territory are said to have got as far as Derby: “Police forgot the road down to the Tanami, people cut across Mongrel Downs (old name for Tanami Downs), then came through the back roads to here (Wangkatjungka). Three car-loads. Then on to Fitzroy (Crossing) and Derby.” (Wangkatjungka: 2021) There are numerous backroads and bush tracks in this region which cut across cattle stations.

The COVID supplement, which arrived in people’s bank accounts in the week of 27 April 2020, may in fact have facilitated greater mobility amongst some groups in this region than was the intention.

### Managing the return of countrymen

As with many remote communities across the Kimberley, Wirrimanu Council members decided early to close access to Balgo from 22 March, 2020 for a minimum of five weeks. They also decided that any returning community members needed to quarantine for two weeks.

However, the strong response from the community was ignored by government agencies who were seeking to move Balgo people out of regional towns like Broome, Halls Creek and Kununurra.

On March 31, the Wirrimanu CEO sent to an email to officials across the WA government and NGO sectors:

*Up till now, we have worked hard lobbying government to take urgent practical steps so that people who want to come back to communities can self-isolate before they come. However, even though nearly a week of valuable time has been consumed in discussions, no suitable accommodation has been found. (and Balgo community themselves had decided to let people in by this stage without a 14 day period of quarantine – that decision was made on 30 March – upturning decision from 10 days previously to require returning community members to quarantine. (Balgo CEOs, correspondence)*

Note that on the evening of the 30 March, there were 5 active cases in Broome.

The following day, The Australian published an article stating that:

*A McGowan government spokeswoman confirmed it helped 27 people who would soon travel from the town of Broome to Balgo...They would get temperature checks before their departure from Broome and health checks on arrival. They would not be required to self-isolate. (Aitken and Taylor 2020, April 1)*

According to data provided by the Department of Communities (See Appendix 9), the Return to Community program officially supported only 22 people return to Balgo from elsewhere in WA.

Staff at Wirrimanu AC however, dispute the statement that all returnees had health checks, either before departure, or after arrival. The Broome Shire President Harold Tracey was also reported in the media (Parke 2020) as having similar concerns:

*I'm really concerned about this uncontrolled repatriation of our itinerant population back to communities... They're the most vulnerable people in town in terms of the possibility of exposure to this virus, and to just pop them in planes and buses and send them to the communities, sometimes without screening, could be a disaster.*

Itinerant, and homeless, people were a particular problem to authorities across the Australia during lockdowns. Reasons for homelessness amongst Aboriginal people in the Kimberley however are likely to be very different to those experienced by the population elsewhere. Whether a remote community such as Balgo was safer for itinerant people, given the pressures on housing and on social unity, is a moot point.

It may be the case that they were also identified as signifying a greater risk to the wider population if left unmanaged in the regional towns of the Kimberley.

The total number of returnees was much higher than official figures, with Wirrimanu AC putting the figure closer to 50 – although numbers of people recorded in the Balgo pandemic plan indicate that there were many more people in the community than other official sources of data.

From 26 March, directives at state and federal levels prohibited the travel of any person into a designated region – including the Kimberley – unless they were exempt due to being essential workers or they go into 14 days self-isolation.

The timing of these regulations being arrived at is crucial here, as many people returned to Balgo, and other Kimberley towns and communities, while there were active cases in Broome (the first was announced 24 March).

By 1 April, the day before the Shire boundaries of the Kimberley were closed, there were already 12 cases across the region, including in Halls Creek and Kununurra.

### Tanami Arks

*If so many people in the community are not listening to us leaders, then I've got to move my extended family to an outstation now.* - Nathaniel Stretch, Chairman, Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation, 2020.

Mr Stretch, in this quote above, is referring to the decision taken by the Balgo community to allow extended family members to return to the community, regardless of whether or not they had been subject to any health tests.

The Balgo Pandemic Plan described it thus: "The events of late March and early April led community leadership to take the position that it was a far better risk management proposition to become as self-reliant as possible. In early April, community leaders informed their staff that they had determined that their most prudent course of action was to establish additional outstations for their extended families." (Balgo pp: p 56)

Senior leadership figures in the community asked Wirrimanu AC staff to expand the outstation concept from one at Kearney Range, to five. These were to be established close enough to Balgo to ensure access to the clinic for residents, but far enough away so that social distancing could be enforced.

They named this concept the Tanami Arks.



*The original Tanami Ark at Kearney Range*



Data provided by Wirrimanu, and to Wirrimanu by the Balgo clinic, suggests that their fears around risks to the community were well founded. The clinic data showed that 380 Balgo residents were estimated to be in high-risk category – either because of their age, or because of chronic disease.

Furthermore, Balgo is home to a dozen or more very significant cultural knowledge holders, or songmen. These individuals are cultural knowledge holders for vast areas of country, not only in Balgo but through the Great Sandy Desert and beyond. (Mazella 2020) There was therefore an urgent sense amongst staff at Wirrimanu, and Balgo leaders, that these individuals should be protected from COVID at all costs.

The five outstation areas identified were related to particular families and associated with significant old people. All these places had water, either bore or springwater, and some had tin sheds. Most were 'holiday camps', places where families camp periodically. All of these places were not too far from a clinic, either from Balgo or from Bililuna. (Mazella 2020)

Despite intense lobbying by Wirrimanu AC, government agencies did not provide any financial support to enable the establishment of the Arks. On April 2, an article was published in *The Australian* entitled "The Race to build coronavirus ark for at risk elders" (Aitken and Taylor 2020). Within 48 hours, support from corporate interests was garnered for the concept, and Bunnings parent company Wesfarmers committed to sending a Bunnings truck packed with logistical support (tarps, diesel generators, swags and camping equipment, jerry cans) to the value of \$75 000.

The delivery of the items was hampered however by the interplay of various officers in WA government and associated non-government agencies, which delayed the release of this material to be transported out to Balgo. The concern from government, and health services in the region, was that the Tanami Ark concept was too risky because it would remove older members of the community from easy access to medical clinics – and might require staff from the Clinic to travel to the Arks to deliver medicines. The community's concern was that the hiatus imposed by interagency wrangling delayed the implementation of the outstation strategy at the time when the risks involved in not carrying it out were at their greatest.

Wirrimanu AC argued convincingly that the outstations were both safer in terms of health risks, and that they were culturally the right place for people to be. The pandemic plan stated that: "...living in a community (such as Balgo) is far more risky (in health terms) than living in a regional town, because even the fastest medical evacuation means that it can be many hours before a patient reaches hospital. In bad weather, it can take days."

Weighing risks of course is what a pandemic response in a region like the Kimberley is all about. What is noteworthy in the Balgo case is that senior leaders weighed the risks, according to their own cultural values, their reading of the potential for continued social unrest in the community, and their own understanding of the health system and of the virus. Their response accorded with the directions given by the WA government pandemic planning notice: to be as self-reliant as possible.

In fact, to this end the Wirrimanu AC agreed to "bridge the gap" by identifying a suitably qualified person to deliver necessary health services, including medicines, to the families living at the Arks, as well as provide a vehicle and fuel.

The final approval to allow the truck to enter the community came through from the Regional Police Superintendent of the Kimberley, Greg Croft, in early May 2020 – who was also the Chair of the LEMC. (Crofts and Whitnell 2020)

The updated Pandemic Plan from May 6 recorded that there were 164 people residing at the various Arks.

### Appealing to Culture

The Balgo Pandemic Plan provided to the WA state government made some insightful observations about some of the unintended consequences of returning large numbers of people to the community. In particular, "...this influx had a serious impact in undermining the authority of community leaders. This resulted in making it even more difficult for community leaders to encourage the different tribal groups – fractious at the best of times – to take common united action.

“Furthermore, the results of this uncontrolled influx drove community leaders to the realization that while they still needed to work with the fragile concept of ‘community’ that the hard facts of the matter was that more could be achieved by reverting to stronger more traditionally-based social units – that is working with extended families.

“The events of late March and early April also led community leadership to take the position that it was a far better risk management proposition to become as self-reliant as possible.”

Self-reliance, in this context, equalled a return to what people know best: more traditional ways of living by reviving some of the old ways, hunting and looking for bush tucker, and of self-governing. The latter, arguably, was made impossible by the extreme pressure the community had been put under, whereas the Arks could function under authority figures and at a scale that made sense to the families concerned.

Self-reliance also equated to immediate action, rather than wait for governments to decide to allocate funds.

The Pandemic Plan ends by quoting the National Emergency Response Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: “Responses must be centred on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, ways of living and culture.”

The agility demonstrated by Wirrimanu AC, and responsiveness under extreme pressure, was not in this instance met by government agencies which, by comparison, resulted in actions, on the ground, that were inflexible and sluggish. (Lovesy 2021)

### The Balgo Local Pandemic Action Plan

At 68 pages, the pandemic plan provided by Wirrimanu AC, on behalf of Balgo community, was quite possibly the most comprehensive one provided to the WA government.

It went far beyond the data requested in the template provided to communities, in an attempt to comprehensively document the risks to the Balgo community from COVID-19, as well as to document a range of risk mitigation strategies that government agencies could put in place.

The Balgo Pandemic Plan included very specific population numbers, which had been provided by the Balgo Clinic. The plan also documented a range of other factors which heightened the risk of transmission in the community. These factors were interrelated, and included:

- Overcrowded housing, and poor condition of housing stock
- A complete lack of alternative accommodation, either to house people, or to quarantine /isolate people
- Extensive inter-family fighting
- Poorly managed return of people to Balgo, some of which had been medically assessed, some of which had not
- Poor communications with various authorities involved in returning people to Balgo
- Severe tensions within community around whether or not extended family ought to be allowed to return, given all of the pressures, and limits on resources described above
- Alcohol and drug or gunja dependent members of community
- High levels of mental health issues
- Limited understanding of the dangers of COVID-19
- Many people were not adhering to social distancing advice
- High levels of chronic disease, and an older population
- Significant levels of “covert travelling” confirmed by community leadership and WA Police<sup>95</sup>
- Shortage of PPE
- Resistance amongst community to present for testing in 2020, because of resistance to notion of having to travel to Broome, be tested, and then to self-isolate in Broome until they had received results.

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<sup>95</sup> Balgo is within the Shire of Halls Creek. The only town that Balgo people were able to access once the Shire boundaries were closed was Halls Creek, which limits the sale of take away alcohol to “mid-strength” only. Residents of the Halls Creek Shire were the only residents of the Kimberley that were unable to access full-strength alcohol.

Wirimmanu AC staff observed that Balgo, particularly after the return of countrymen, was dealing with high levels of addiction and mental health issues, and that some members of the community were not, and could not be expected to be, compliant with travel restrictions.

Wirimmanu also reported that the community store in Balgo, partly due to increases in income, as well as returned community members, was trading at about the twice the normal level by late April.

The Pandemic Plan also documented community concerns relating to the sale of ganja<sup>96</sup>, which Wirrimanu AC attempted to control by limiting the amount of cash withdrawable from the store ATM. The use of cash was deemed a risk for transmitting COVID-19 but concerns about social unrest relating to ganja access was deemed a higher risk. The pandemic plan noted that “Cross border incursions by ganja dealers is highly likely.” (Lovesy 2021)

Even as early as May 2020, the store, run by Wirrimanu AC, was prepared to do house to house, and outstation/ark, food delivery. Fortunately by this time, it was becoming evident the regional lockdown had been effective, and new COVID cases in the Kimberley had fallen to zero by mid-April.

The organisation also made the observation that, when social distancing rules were being abided by, community meetings were not possible. Community leadership and organisational staff necessarily communicated by mobile phone. However mobile phone network access is uneven across much of the Kimberley.

In October 2020, an officer from the Department of Premier and Cabinet made reference to a risk matrix and heat map of risk that was being developed based on all the information provided in pandemic plans (Worsdell 2020). This heat map was not made available to the research project, and also not provided back to Aboriginal communities or organisations. However, given what we know about Balgo, and how a range of factors coalesce there around mobility, the age of the population, the convergence of five or more language and cultural groups and resulting tensions in governance, and its proximity to the Northern Territory border, we expect that Balgo would rate highly in terms of risks for future outbreaks of COVID-19.

The health authorities seem to acknowledge that the community of Balgo represented a unique set of risks in the context of the current pandemic, and it was the first remote community (in May, 2021) in Australia to have point-of-care testing with results delivered within 45 minutes. Prior to this testing option, Balgo residents with COVID-like symptoms had been flown via RFDS the 900kms to the town of Broome for testing.



Wirrimanu Staff with Bunnings donations in Balgo.

<sup>96</sup> Marijuana

## Halls Creek

The small, predominantly Aboriginal town of Halls Creek<sup>97</sup> in the south-east Kimberley accounted for four positive cases of COVID, more than any Kimberley town other than Broome. The first, in early April, was a doctor who, together with a Kununurra border patrol worker, were the first reported instances of COVID-19 in the East Kimberley. Three days later, two more health workers at the hospital tested positive, and a fourth soon after that.<sup>98</sup>

While the timing of the outbreak in Halls Creek was unpredictable, local organisations and community members had been sounding warnings about potential sources of transmission in the weeks before.<sup>99</sup> The town is the main service centre for the Halls Creek Shire, an area of some 143,030 square kilometres, with the only hospital, which is reliant on FIFO doctors. Its shops, hotel, postal service and mechanical workshops provide essential goods and services for FIFO mine workers working in the Shire and to travellers – the border with the Northern Territory (NT) forms the eastern boundary of the Shire and the shortest route by road between WA and Alice Springs, on the Tanami Highway, begins near Halls Creek – as well as residents in remote Aboriginal communities and on pastoral stations.<sup>100</sup>

With the spread of the pandemic to WA and then the Kimberley, local organisations and community members in the town and remotes became increasingly concerned about the movement of people from elsewhere into the Shire and the need for arrivals to be screened. An associated concern was about how quickly an outbreak of COVID would spread because of high levels of household overcrowding and the urgent need for facilities to be made available for people to self-isolate in.

Unlike the neighbouring towns of Kununurra and Fitzroy Crossing where many Aboriginal residents relocated to outstation communities and blocks, there are few settlements of this kind in the vicinity of Halls Creek,<sup>101</sup> so this was not an option for most families even if they had the means to relocate.<sup>102</sup> Those who had the choice who we interviewed left, while most stayed in their homes in town.

### Increased movement of people to and through the Shire

The Shire of Halls Creek estimates that some 100 people returned to the township in March – early April because of COVID-19. (Olabud Doogethu 2020: 4) Between 23 March to 2 April, the government-funded COVID-19 Return to Communities Program brought a steady flow of people on the regular Greyhound service from Broome, followed by full charter buses from Derby and Kununurra as well as in their own cars. While many were in transit to communities in the Shire, some were heading further afield including to the NT. Local organisation, Jungarni Jutiya Aboriginal Corporation (JJAC), coordinated onward travel arrangements and support with food and fuel, including arranging for charter buses and flights to the desert communities of Ringers Soak, Billiluna, Balgo and Mulan.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> The population of the Halls Creek Local Government Area in the 2016 census was 3,269, 2,425 Aboriginal and 535 non-Aboriginal, and Aboriginal people comprised 82% of the usual resident count, however we take these estimates to be undercounts of the true number of Indigenous people (see Taylor 2020: 19).

<sup>98</sup> From March - April 2020, there were 18 positive cases of COVID-19 reported in the Kimberley. By 29 April, all cases had been cleared and no more were reported for the region.

<sup>99</sup> This included a meeting on the town oval in mid-March at which community members voiced their fears about the town's vulnerability.

<sup>100</sup> The Halls Creek Shire estimates that some 3,000 people are living in remote communities in the LGA, which include the communities of Warmun (Turkey Creek), Balgo (Wirrimanu), Billiluna (Mindibungu), Mulan, Ringers Soak (Kundat Djaru), and Yiyili. <https://www.halls creek.wa.gov.au/community/communities>

<sup>101</sup> The reasons for this are historical and beyond the scope of the present research.

<sup>102</sup> In the last census over 35% of Halls Creek households reported not having a car. [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC50600](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC50600)

<sup>103</sup> JJAC was engaged on 23 March and finished about the end of first week of April 2020.



JJAC staff at office, Halls Creek (Photo: JJAC)

While in the town people had begun voicing their concerns about the vulnerability from outside transmission,<sup>104</sup> some remote community councils had responded to the crisis very quickly and were the first to insist on the screening of people wanting to return home.

*We were helping people to get back to remote communities, but some of the community councils had decided that they weren't opening up to people unless they isolated for 14 days first. (JJAC: 2021)*

In highly pressured circumstances, JJAC worked closely with community councils to develop and implement suitable relocation arrangements, which included addressing their concerns that certain unwelcome individuals did not return and, in accordance with alcohol restrictions, that checks were undertaken.

The relocation process was hampered generally by a lack of regionally coordinated support for Program activities. Without it, for example, JJAC staff did not know in advance who or how many people to expect on the buses heading to Halls Creek, making planning and implementation much more difficult. In frustration, JJAC contacted the Department of Communities about the need for more cooperation across LGAs, even if limited to the sharing of essential information, but was directed to do this itself. After contacting several of its frontline counterparts, all of whom were working to capacity, and with no offer of higher-level support from government, it dropped the matter.

<sup>104</sup> This included at a community meeting on the oval to inform people about the pandemic in the second or third week of March.

During this time until June, the town's local Night Patrol service, which JJAC runs, continued to operate. This was essential given the high demand for home deliveries, which the supermarket and a local taxi were also offering. However, to minimize the risk of transmission, the service pivoted, first, to taking people in need to the shops during the day, with strict caps on the number of passengers and hygiene rules. After a re-think, the Patrol then changed to making home deliveries, which "seemed more in line with the requirements for people to stay at home" (JJAC: 2021) and alleviated the concerns of the drivers and other staff that they were too exposed.



Halls Creek Night Patrol bus (Photo: JJAC)

### Outbreak in a remote Aboriginal town

On 1 April, some eight days after the first Kimberley cases in Broome, the case of the locum doctor at the Halls Creek hospital, who had travelled from interstate while infectious, was publicly reported. While this was one of seven regional cases announced on that day,<sup>105</sup> the WA Health Minister expressed most concern for those at risk in the Halls Creek area, saying: "That particular doctor would have been seeing patients that were coming from a wide area of the Kimberley and then themselves transitioning back out into remote communities." (R Cook, 2 April 2020).<sup>106</sup>

In the days following, the community publicly expressed its dismay, frustration and anger about the government's delay in sharing the information about the first positive case with local organisations, reflecting the poor level of communications, absence of transparency, and lack of preparedness of local emergency management processes. A lot of this emotion was directed at the hospital.

<sup>105</sup> Apart from one in Kununurra, the remainder were in Broome.

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-02/kimberley-coronavirus-spike-sees-shire-borders-closed/12115580>



*Halls Creek Shire President Malcolm Edwards said community leaders across the region were learning about key developments from the media, not the Government. "Obviously...[we're] insisting that this changes and that we receive information as soon as possible, so hopefully that's being addressed."*

*Residents said the flow of information to the community had been haphazard and confusing. Long-time resident Bonnie Edwards said people were anxious and she wanted a better idea of how the pandemic was spreading within the Kimberley. "People don't know what happened at the hospital, they don't know what's going on," she said. "It should be told to the people so we can avoid this being spread around the community."* (E Parke, Rebecca Nadge and James Carmody, 2 April 2020)

As the effort to determine the extent of the exposure and to manage the outbreak began, by 9 April another three other healthcare workers at the hospital had tested positive. Nevertheless, by that time, the health minister was able to say with confidence that no one else – patients or community members – had been exposed to the workers. (S. Tomlin and V. Mills: 2020).<sup>107</sup> Ultimately, the outbreak did not spread beyond the hospital. (ABC News Online, 9 April 2020).

This local crisis led the government to basing a senior health executive in Halls Creek to lead the on-the-ground response to the outbreak. For local organisations such as JJAC, this presence was a crucial step in bridging the gulf between themselves and emergency management agencies by facilitating a greater degree of cooperation and the sharing of information.

On 2 April, the WA Government introduced measures to restrict the movement of people between towns or LGAs by putting in place new boundaries in line with the four local government areas within the region. Associated with this was a requirement that all who entered must quarantine for a fortnight. The number of people the Return to Communities Program was supporting ground to a halt by the week's end. Much to the relief of local organisations, by the second week of April, the mandatory quarantining of health workers entering Halls Creek was in place.

## Overcrowded Homes

The state of public housing in the town and communities of the Halls Creek Shire is dire. In his 2020 population-based analysis of Aboriginal social and economic change in the East Kimberley region over a 15-year period, John Taylor found that: "In the Halls Creek LGA, the number of identified Aboriginal dwellings barely increased since 2001 (an additional 12 dwellings or a 2% increase)" (2020: 106 - 7) and across the East Kimberley, "the greatest apparent housing need is in Halls Creek LGA where 35% of dwellings require extra bedrooms." (2020: 112).

Aside from safeguarding people in the Shire from transmission from elsewhere, a prevailing concern among community leaders was that COVID-19 would spread very fast within overcrowded homes, making them a major risk for the transmission of the virus. Given the lack of capacity for people to self-isolate at home, the need for emergency accommodation was urgent and great. This was communicated to government and advocated for by the Shire, community councils and local organisations in other ways, including through the media. Similar pressures were being experienced in the desert communities, where tensions broke out over the increased overcrowding caused by the influx of people returning home.

Frustrated by the absence of action to ensure people had somewhere to self-isolate, the Halls Creek Shire supported its Olabud Doogethu (OB) initiative<sup>108</sup> to undertake a survey on the extent of overcrowding in Aboriginal households in Halls Creek. OB staff door-knocked all Aboriginal and Public Housing households in the town vicinity and secured a response rate of between 76% and 100% across all.<sup>109</sup> The survey sought to demonstrate in quantitative terms the extent of overcrowding<sup>110</sup> across all Aboriginal households in the town's two suburban areas, two town reserves and two adjacent communities, and to find out whether household members planned to self-isolate at home or elsewhere if they were required to i.e. whether they had the capacity to or not.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>107</sup> In contrast, in Broome there were three mystery cases, where contact tracers were unable to identify the origin of their infections. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-12/covid-19-kimberley-mystery-transmission-causes-concern/12237894>

<sup>108</sup> See <https://olabuddoogethu.org.au/about-us/#> The data sought was on the number of people living in the household, the number of bedrooms in each, and whether the residents would be able to safely isolate in their house or would have to look for alternative places to do so, that is, the household's capacity to self-isolate.

<sup>109</sup> The authors state that the data represents 91% of the Department of Communities' housing stock.

<sup>110</sup> The authors adopt the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's definition of overcrowding, which, in basic terms, occurs when a dwelling requires at least one additional bedroom for the size and composition of the household. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/housing-assistance-in-australia-2018/contents/overcrowding-and-underutilisation>

<sup>111</sup> The data reveal that the two suburban areas of the town, Top Area and Garden Area, have above average occupancy comparable to the community living areas of Yardgee and Nicholson block (cf. Taylor p. 113).

The measures taken by the government post-outbreak included the establishment of an isolation facility, first at a local workers hostel seven kilometres out of town, but reportedly after some difficulties, at the Halls Creek Motel and Kimberley Hotel. JJAC's role from this time through until June was to support people who were quarantining, which included community members waiting for test results as well as essential workers entering the LGA.

In interviews with community members and staff from local organisations in 2021, people said they were feeling as vulnerable in the face of the Delta strain and now Omicron as they were last year, and that there are few, if any, signs that the experiences of the first wave have left the town better prepared.

## Waringarri Aboriginal Arts

At the time governments in Australia were first responding to the arrival of the COVID pandemic, local Aboriginal organisations were among the first to take critical action to keep their people safe. Among them, in the town of Kununurra in the East Kimberley, was Waringarri Aboriginal Arts, where the Board was one of the first to implement a plan to protect its staff and constituents in highly uncertain and complex circumstances. On all fronts, it was an extraordinary year for the organisation.

### Early and decisive action

Established in the early-1980s, Waringarri Aboriginal Arts is one of the oldest continuous running Aboriginal art centres in the country and the first community-owned one in WA.<sup>112</sup> It is overseen by a Board of Directors comprised of 12 Miriwoong<sup>113</sup> traditional owners and employs 15 staff that support more than 100 local artists. All proceeds from the artistic and cultural activities are returned to the community to support projects.

*In the very beginning, it was complex trying to understand what the rules were to do the right thing. We work with vulnerable people and we're open to the public...Now there's a WA COVID website, safety measures are everywhere, but at the start we were working with what was in the media and little else. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

In mid-March 2020, the art centre Board met to assess the risks of COVID for the artists and staff and their families and to determine how the organisation could best ensure their safety and well-being. The decision was unanimous: people would be helped to move from Kununurra to be on Country.

*We wanted all our old people out of town, and it wasn't hard for us to do that even though it was a lot of extra physical operational work. The artists wanted to go, so it wasn't a challenge. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

The agreed plan was to relocate people to one of three outstation communities in the Kununurra area. This included staff who were not living in their own homes or in staff housing or who were otherwise unable to socially distance where they were living. A small number of artists chose to stay in town and were also supported by the staff.

*We were very mindful that the support staff needed to be healthy and able to live safely. So that was the criteria of staying on at work. And for those that had to take leave, when the JobKeeper came in, they were given projects to participate in. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

### Taking charge for ourselves

*There was a high level of fear at the start of the pandemic. Our program was specifically designed not to be about that. We took a decision very early on that we would focus on what was positive. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

On 20 March, Waringarri Arts closed its doors to all outsiders, and was not to reopen for three and a half months. That week, the six remaining staff moved quickly to relocate artists, staff and their families to one of three places on Miriwoong country: a community near Lake Argyle; a community outstation just over the Northern Territory (NT) border; and a seasonal block some 15–20 kms out of Kununurra.



Jan Griffiths using a bush broom  
(Photo: Alana Hunt)

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.waringarriarts.com.au>

<sup>113</sup> The Native Title holding body, Yawoorroong Miriwoong Gajerrong Yirregeb Noong Dawang Corporation, which is known in short as Miriwoong Gajerrong or MG Corporation, uses a different orthography.



While the first two are permanent communities with housing, the last is an outstation with little infrastructure, where staff arranged for the installation of water pumps and building of toilets and set up camps with tents, tables and chairs. All three had limited or no internet or mobile phone range as the National Broadband Network was not available in Kununurra until mid-to-late 2020. From the time people relocated, the art centre was responsible for collecting orders for provisions from each of the outstations, and then assembling and dropping off the deliveries to one once a week, to another twice a week, and to the third three times a week.

Staff worked around the obstacles of a lack of digital connectivity as best they could. At the NT outstation, for example, the only way they could communicate with community members was via a ranger office with a phone, where they left a message when it was manned. The ranger would in turn leave a note at a public phone box in the vicinity, which the community would check every one to two days.

In the planning and delivery of these operations, the organisation worked largely on its own. The only contact with the Department of Communities and any of the other emergency management agencies was when the former requested assistance with the development of three pandemic plans for the outstations Waringarri Arts was supporting.

*The Department of Communities asked us to get all the names and dates of birth of everybody into the community plans. That was extra work for us, there was lots of going backwards and forwards and negotiating with the community about what they wanted. As a result, we were only able to offer a really basic plan. That's all we could get to. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

Apart from engaging Miriwung Gajerrong Corporation to support the costs of installing a water pump at the seasonal camp, the art centre worked independently of other local community organisations as well.

*It would have been good if it'd been a more collective effort in Kununurra. In the beginning there was little collaboration between organisations. We were maybe a bit reactive – or it might have appeared reactive – in doing what was a decision by the Board. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

### Lockdown out on Country

*We had a strong plan in place to keep artists and families safe while we continued working on our projects. Instead of working at the art centre, we'll be working out bush making new artworks. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

A key part of the Board's thinking about essential provisions during the lockdown was the importance of providing the artists with art supplies – "to make sure they feel good not down". (Waringarri Arts: 2021).

*We were lucky that we had secured funding in 2019 and were able to roll out a productive, positive, creative cultural rejuvenation program. It was like someone was looking after us. And it worked. And then with the challenging stuff, well you've got to learn from experience. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*



Painting Together at Jylinum - Griffiths Family (Photo: Anita Churchill)

Given the absence of or limited internet and mobile phone range, the artists used iPads to communicate and document how they were and what they were doing. The videos record time spent with family, collecting bush tucker and medicines, painting, making artefacts, telling stories, learning language with the young ones, fishing, swimming and cooking.

*One of the things that we were hearing about and sharing in our regular Zoom meetings across the country was that there was a resurgence in cultural practice, because people could afford to, which is really important, the fight for survival wasn't there because of the increased Centrelink payments, so there was room to do that. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

*It was a great opportunity too to let the young ones know that it's not all...in town, that you can have fun out bush too. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

The video-making has resulted in the organisation and the artists having a much greater social media presence than ever before. One of the recordings, COVID, Art and Culture, was sold to the WA Museum to screen in its new premises (to view this, press the link).

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E53wJRfqMS1zDaOt3dOKP-9Cqaaxvzel/view?usp=sharing>

With the shutting of the gallery and postponing and cancelling of upcoming exhibitions, Waringarri Arts "put a lot of effort into speaking with our good friends, which led to a couple of big commissions and some smaller commissions". (Waringarri Arts: 2021)

*Together with some small grants and the JobKeeper payments, that was really how we got through last year in a really good way that kept the artists safe and generated a lot of excitement and positive engagement with them. It was amazing, the effort that the staff made, the extra yards that people went.*

*There was a lot of extra work after we re-opened such as uploading things on to websites for art fairs. The extra work that we did last year was phenomenal. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

### Strong Cultural Leadership

The artists, staff and families staying at two of the communities returned to town in mid-July. Strong cultural leadership was the overriding factor in keeping people not only safe but well and engaged.

At the third outstation, after two to three weeks in isolation, the pressures of not seeing or having access to other family members, mobile phones and internet, television and possibly ganja and alcohol became too great for some of the younger members, and people began to drift back into Kununurra. The absence of adequate infrastructure exacerbated an already difficult situation and, after three or four weeks, the outstation disbanded.

The Waringarri Arts Board's approach extended to the care for "family members, particularly teenagers, with mental health and/or alcohol and ganja issues and the level of support they'd need".

At one time, the organisation did seek assistance on this front.

*We faced a messy situation and expressed concern to others about our need for help – and I guess everybody at that time, Department of Communities, others – no one knew what to do, how to manage, everyone was being pulled every which way. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

With people re-united in town after more than three months, the Board reviewed the organisation's efforts.

*We've talked about what we would do if it happened again, and the decision of the Board was that we would do the same thing again but that those people [who came into town early] be placed somewhere else. The ideal circumstances are that there'd be better infrastructure in that community, or that there was somewhere in town where people who couldn't stay out of town could stop safely. It's a very difficult one.*

*In retrospect, we would do it all again. In terms of that one community, all we would do is make sure that the aged and vulnerable from that community went to one or the other communities. That's the decision of the directors if we have to do it again. (Waringarri Arts: 2021)*

The art centre reopened in mid-July 2020.



## One Arm Point and Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation

This case study overviews the experiences of community members from Ardyaloon/One Arm Point, and outlines the initiatives taken by the Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation.<sup>114</sup>

Ardyaloon and Djarindjin<sup>115</sup> are two communities on the northern end of Dampier Peninsula, around 200 kms to the north of Broome. According to the 2016 Census, the population of Ardyaloon was around 365 people, and the population of Djarindjin was 395.

The Dampier Peninsula has a large number of small outstations, up to 80 by some estimates, which dot the area, and which are predominately on the coast. A 2015 WA Department of Lands, Planning and Heritage report estimated there were between 450 – 650 people residing in these small outstations, or 40% of the population of the entire peninsula (Department of Lands Planning and Heritage WA 2015). This report, and others, note that residency in these outstations is highly variable, and affected by the seasonality of access. As figure 6 documents, the majority do not receive essential services such as water quality checking, or building maintenance, or power supply.

Residents of these communities are by and large saltwater people (Marshall 2021) and are heavily reliant on marine resources for a significant part of their diet.

Both communities have a store, although the Djarindjin store is community-owned and run.

At the start of 2020, the road north of Broome and through the Dampier Peninsula was still dirt, although by the end of 2020, it had been sealed.

Both communities are part of the Shire of Broome.

In a normal year, the Dampier Peninsula receives high numbers of international and Australian tourists. Until WA withdrew from the Biosecurity Act on June 5 2020, the only people who were able to visit the Peninsula for recreation were residents of Broome, and only if they did not enter any of the remote communities.

### Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation

The Djarindjin CEO reported that when COVID hit, many community members "...went bush, just went and camped in the sand dunes. Camped at outstations. The community was nearly empty. Some families were out there for 3 months." (CEO Djarindjin 2021) People returned regularly to the community for shopping and other supplies, including water. This movement out bush was supported by the COVID supplement because people were able to purchase stores, fuel and other necessities. The downside of the COVID supplement however was that the staffing level of the organisation dropped from 55 down to 20 people because Jobseeker was almost equivalent to their working wage.

He also observed that the traffic between the community, and outstations, and the regional centre of Broome was high, and that it was impossible to limit this movement. Despite the risk this movement posed to the community, he commented that a level of complacency existed.

Djarindjin fared rather well compared to other remote community organisations in terms of funding it was able to source during the pandemic, partly because of their good relationships with oil and gas companies Shell and Inpex, both of which utilise the Djarindjin airport for refuelling and to service offshore oil and gas rigs. The community organisation received over \$120 000 from these two corporations, enabling them to build community assets (a new playground, solar powered streetlights) as well as helping to provision community households (new linen, mattresses, towels and washing machines were purchased for every house in the community as part of an anti-scabies campaign, as well as camping and fishing gear).

They also received a grant from Lotterywest, enabling them to purchase a shipping container with freezer and fridge for food security – and a generator to run them – as well as solar panels on the roadhouse. Some of this funding helped pay for a 4wd bus. The WA Department of Premier and Cabinet also contributed \$42k to help fund a backhoe (total cost of around \$250K).

Communication with both Department of Communities staff and with WACHS staff around the pandemic plan was not difficult. By the time of our interview in mid 2021, it was agreed that there was nowhere in the community for self-isolation, and that the only option should there be a COVID outbreak, would be for the entire community to go into lockdown.

<sup>114</sup> We were unsuccessful in gaining an interview with the CEO of Ardyaloon Inc.

<sup>115</sup> Often referred to as Djarindjin/Lombadina.

A detailed plan of how that lockdown would be managed, how people would receive food, which staff from the organisation would manage food drops etc, was in place.

The CEO did make the observation however that if there was a positive case in the community, many people would just "...take off. How am I gonna stop them? I wouldn't be able to stop them." He also observed that there was no internet in the community, but that negotiations were underway with the Aboriginal Lands Trust to put a repeater in place.

At the time of writing, the community had one of the highest vaccination rates in the Kimberley.

### **Ardyaloon (One Arm Point) Community Members**

A number of interviews were conducted on behalf of the project by a resident of Ardyaloon. All of those interviews commented on the need to travel to Broome to purchase stores because the cost of food there was so much cheaper compared to the local store at One Arm Point, despite the 400 km distance such a trip entailed. Community residents also pointed out that the community store had strict restrictions on amounts that could be purchased, so people were unable to purchase enough stores to enable them to remain at an outstation for any period of time.

Police were asking people travelling into Broome to shop instead at the One Arm Point store, but they were unable to enforce directions to this effect. Cheaper fuel was another reason people cited for making the trip to Broome.

Unlike remote community residents in, for example, the Fitzroy Valley, no support was provided via the Department of Communities return to community program for residents of Ardyaloon to return from Broome or other parts of the state, or to leave town and move to an outstation. Indeed, residents of this part of the Kimberley were unaware that such support was available, and was being provided to people across the region:

*I just supported myself (laughing).*

The only support any interviewees could recall was from Save the Children – they bin give out relief packs of food, stock to the community members, dry foods. So things like toilet paper and canned goods and tea.

### **Outstation living**

One mother, and usual resident of Ardyaloon, took her family out to an island to wait out the pandemic. Bardi Jawi people in this part of the Kimberley have traditional ownership of nearby islands, and a long history of seafaring, and travelling between the islands to the east of the Peninsula and coastline:

*...we were lucky we had a boat, so we had resources to support that decision to go and stay out on the island. It wasn't just my family too. It was a couple of households, so we were supporting each other...we had a couple of boats out there to do the runs to pick up the supplies, water and everything*

*We was actually much healthier...was living off a healthier diet, seafood, better just living off the land and the sea. We had no wifi, and kids, they actually learned they were quite happy without it!...the kids didn't really worry about the Wi Fi they were out all day just good, enjoying themselves. We had a reef just offshore and the kids, they called it our supermarket.*

*My girl was six at the time, and even today, she will ask me, "When are we going back home to the island?" (Isaacs family 2021)*

This mother commented that her main motivation for moving to the island was her children, and her reluctance to keep them housebound:

*I couldn't keep my kids at home, kids will be kids. We live in a community, the culture, that everyday lifestyle, the kids were not prepared to be locked in a house every day, so the kids were the risk. We wouldn't have been able to keep our kids, keep our family or our children, in our house. (Isaacs family 2021)*



Lockdown on an island near One Arm Point

She also recalled the stress of not knowing enough about how COVID was transmitted:

*It was very stressful within the household. That's why I decided to move my family out ...we thought the only way we would keep safe is just to be by ourselves...it was just too much to handle staying at home so that's why we decided to move out of the house, and out to the island. (Isaacs family 2021)*

It is worth observing that this individual accessed her superannuation to support this period of lockdown on the island.

She also spoke about cultural obligations, and that social distancing would not have been possible had she stayed in town:

*...just that mental concern around, you know keeping my distance from my own family so that that impacted us in a big way - Personally, I'm unable to, you know, not go near our families or separate our families...or not talk to our families and be with our families. (Isaacs family 2021)*

*... it restricted us from seeing old people that needed help doing day to day stuff. We ended up having to move out to block Lullumb, even that was still hard because we had to go to the Roadhouse to restock on food. And that was still exposing us to the virus, because it was open to everyone. (Yue Family 2021)*

All of those interviewed who returned to outstations commented that they had to return to town, for food, for fuel and for water:

*We didn't have much help. But we was comfortable, but didn't have help and water and... water was a problem...because we had to travel back to community to get water.*

### **In Ardyaloon<sup>116</sup>**

Almost all families interviewed at Ardyaloon commented on the cost of Wifi, and that the extra money from the COVID supplement helped pay for the extra wifi that people were using while looked in their houses – especially those families with young children:

*...a lot of families struggled, they used a lot of their money to pay for Wi Fi so kids could be entertained.*

People observed that while the community of Ardyaloon was closed, no one, apart from the CEO in the early days, was manning the road block into the community.

*I'll be honest, I was very cautious with people, families that were living in Broome, and they were coming in because they know they could come and go as they please, whereas we couldn't, this was our home we lived here (Ardyaloon). So they were putting us more at risk*

Another older woman who was interviewed had a spouse with chronic illness:

*...because my husband is really sick...it was just too risky for anybody that just come to my house not even my grannies (grandchildren) could come there. We were stuck at home and really isolated.*

Many people commented on the return, not only of individuals, but of entire families, to the community of Ardyaloon.

*...they were more safer here...everyone run back to the communities. We had lots of families*

Others observed that while those younger adults with young children had been able to head to outstations, older people were left behind, or chose to remain, at Ardyaloon. Services that would ordinarily have been available to older community members ceased at that time, and many had carers that had to return to other communities. Accessing health care was also a problem for older people, as the normal outreach services stopped.

A few observations can be made about the feedback we received via the interviews with community members in Ardyaloon. Firstly that the experience of being in lockdown was expensive, whether you went to an outstation (fuel, food and travelling to access these as well as water) or you stayed home in the community (and therefore accessed more power via powercards, and wifi). Those who had the opportunity to get out on country however reported a much more positive experience in general.

Secondly, that the costs of basic provisions from the local community store, including the cost of fuel, were so great that it made the 400 kilometre round trip to Broome make economic sense – and that while people bemoaned others coming and going from the community, all conceded that they, too, had travelled in and out of Broome.

All people interviewed commented that they were not aware of any pandemic planning that was undertaken in 2020, and at the time of interviews in 2021, they remained unaware of what the plan might be, should there be an outbreak of COVID-19 in Ardyaloon. A number stated that self-isolation would be impossible, both for cultural reasons (that people could not remain isolated from each other for wellbeing or cultural obligation reasons) and that there simply was not the space within people's houses.

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<sup>116</sup> We did attempt to interview the CEO of One Arm Point Aboriginal Corporation but he was unavailable.

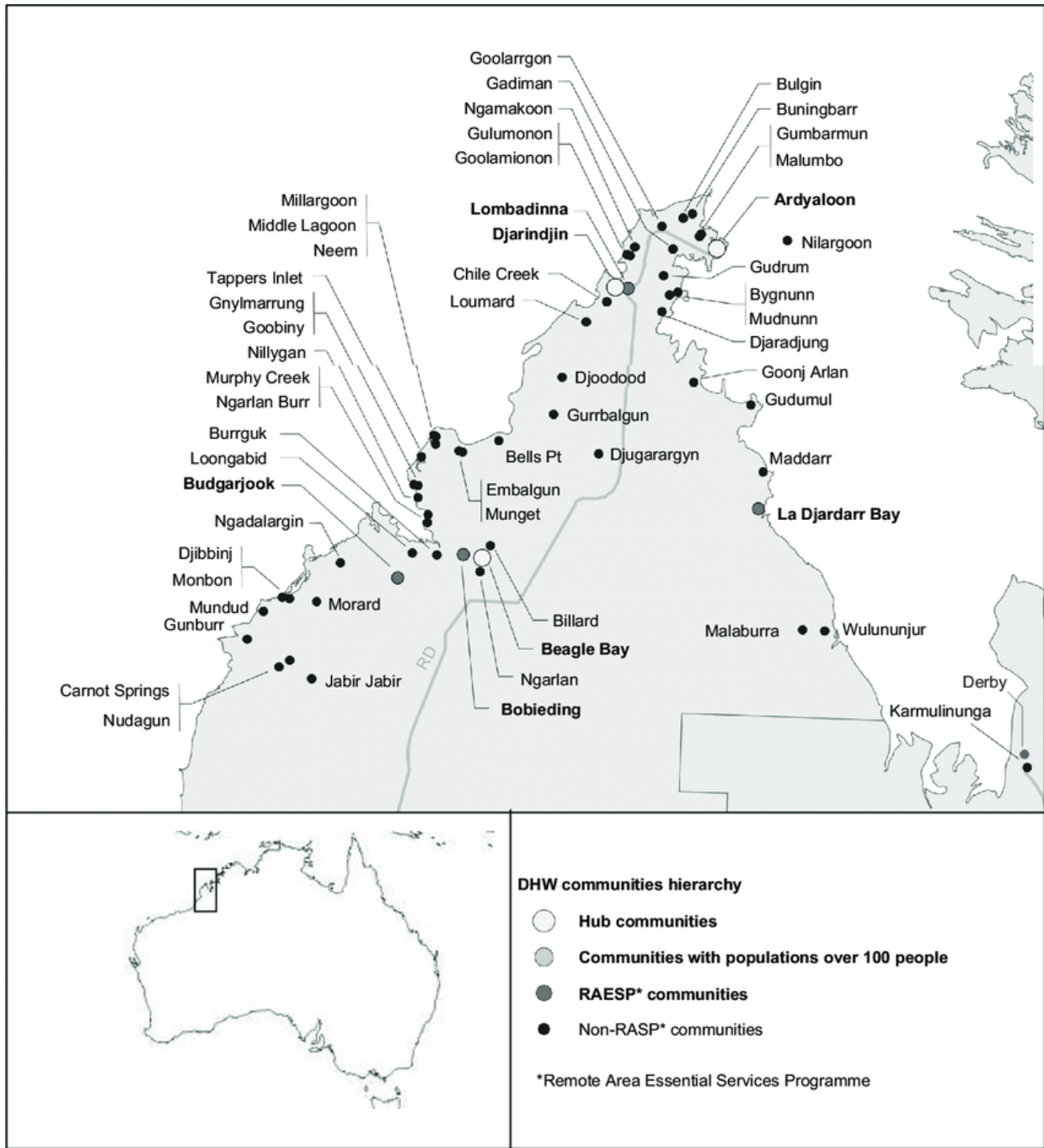


Figure 10: Outstations on the Dampier Peninsula<sup>117</sup>

<sup>117</sup> While this map is somewhat out of date, it does indicate over 50 outstations on the Dampier Peninsula, the majority of which do not fall under essential services. Source: Ciancio and Boulter (2012) More recent estimates suggest there are more like 80 outstations. (DPLH 2015)

## Nyamba Buru Yawuru (NBY)

*What we saw during the early stages of COVID, the immediate thing I remember was as soon as we were told that there were cases in Broome and that it would be locked down, the Senior Cultural authority around Nyamba Buru Yawuru just clicked straight into action, so the immediate thought was for the elders and the more vulnerable people in the community...they just kicked straight into action with any thought for self (NBY Community Development Unit Manager 2021)*

Nyamba Buru Yawuru (NBY) is the only prescribed body corporate<sup>118</sup> considered in this report. It was also the only Aboriginal organization we interviewed which did not receive any form of government assistance to underwrite its response to COVID-19.

The Yawuru people are the traditional owners of the lands and waters in and around Rubibi (the town of Broome), and the organisation has a membership of over one thousand people, the vast majority of whom reside in the regional centre of Broome.

NBY is distinct from other Aboriginal organisations considered here because for the most part, its income is not generated from government grants. By and large, the organisation is funded by private investments in areas such as property, the pastoral industry and joint ventures with other business enterprise in the town of Broome.

As COVID rapidly emerged as a threat in the first two months of 2020, NBY shifted focus rapidly – or pivoted, as was the catchphrase at the time.

The vast majority of projects, across social support services, commercial negotiations, Yawuru language lessons and cultural services such as welcomes to country and cultural immersion training, were put on hold from 17 March 2020.

The Office was closed in the third week of March, and by the end of April, the organisation had managed to access to Jobkeeper, and to retain most staff, the majority of whom continued to work from home. All staff had their contracts reduced to .8FTE, to enable this level of staff retention. Where possible, staff were provided with laptops and received IT support to work from home, and to attend online meetings.

Staff began to return to the office, which according to the last annual report employed 76 people (51 of whom were Yawuru), from 4 May, and the office opened to the general public from 1 June 2020.

### Communications

The focus of communications – both between the executive and staff, and between NBY and its members – shifted dramatically because of Covid-19, and the organisation prioritised daily communications across the entire organisation in the first three of weeks of the onset of the covid-19 crisis to ensure that staff, members of both NBY and PBC Boards, and the organisations' membership were as well aware as possible about the rapidly changing government regulations, and about ways to keep families safe.

Daily executive meetings were held to ensure all senior staff were up to date on latest advice. Social media, especially via Facebook, was a vital means of communications with the organisation's membership. Certain posts during this time reached audiences beyond the organisation's usual levels – for example, the post about how NBY was delivering elders care packs reached nearly 5 000 people.

Staff recalled a desperate scramble for information, beyond the official announcements, which could be passed on to membership. They also recalled that official advice was often completely culturally or socially irrelevant:

*How could we (NBY) advise people to maintain social distancing when we knew how overcrowded people's housing is? It just didn't make any sense.*

*It was all very loose, in understanding what things like social distancing really meant for Aboriginal mob... we should have had daily messaging, like from Goollari, radio, from the Aboriginal task force, consistent messaging. But instead it really depended on your networks in government and in health as to whether you, as a staff member, were able to access up-to-date information to pass on to the membership of NBY. (NBY Community Development Unit Manager 2021)*

One staff member made the observation that while the Department of Health was leading the response, in the early days there was no 'translation' of that response to make it applicable to Aboriginal households.

<sup>118</sup> www.yawuru.org.au; NBY is the corporate group incorporating the Native Title holding PBC for Yawuru people, and which drives the social and economic development of Yawuru people.



## Pivot to care of elders and the vulnerable

NBY responded to the increase in demand for crisis relief support that emerged as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. On 16 March, the NBY COVID-19 Community Support Taskforce was established to redirect resources towards the coordination, preparation and distribution of comprehensive care packs to senior community members, in order to support their physical, social and emotional well-being and most importantly to enable them to remain in social isolation.

The contents of the care packs included information in relation to government and health advice, hygiene and sanitation products, non-perishable food items and other essential household products. In addition, senior cultural personnel were gathering and preparing traditional foods and medicines to provide a boost to recipients' physical and emotional well-being.

They were also providing fresh fish caught and distributed daily, meat packs and nutritious meals prepared by a skeleton staff who were retained for this purpose at the organisation's café, Mabu Mayi. The care packs were distributed to community members living in isolation because of the threat of COVID-19, many of them elderly:

*Well those old people felt really down and out. But when I started dropping off packs and everything to help them out. You can see them lighten up, they wanted to sit down, talk and give them.. give understanding of how they felt so...they felt very isolated.*

*And more or less they felt threatened in the ways that they had to be locked indoors and not allowed to go and see family...really actually made them sad. (NBY Community Development Unit Frontline Worker 2021)*

All packs were distributed in accordance with strict risk management protocols, to ensure recipients, staff and the wider community were protected from any potential infection. By late April, NBY had already delivered care packs to nearly 500 senior members and their households, including 27 community members with disabilities.

The coordinator of these efforts recalled that:

*...for us mob on the frontline, we did not miss a day, those girls were just fully PPE-ed up, Auntie Di was just fully hygiene products going everywhere, sprayed in cars and everything because of that fear of infecting others. The community is still grateful for that time...So it's just fortunate in a way that NBY had a kind of a financial base to draw on for this emergency. I think we were all trusting, as an organisation, that we would receive something, something back from the government to cover the costs of our efforts. But unfortunately, we didn't. (NBY Community Development Unit Manager 2021)*



NBY was possibly unsuccessful in applying for grants because, by the time the grant applications to funds such as the Lotterywest COVID Relief Fund<sup>119</sup> had been processed, much of the emergency had already passed in the Kimberley and movement restrictions were being lifted. That is, NBY had already spent funds assisting the most vulnerable through the months of lockdown in April and into May, and the funding was not available retrospectively.<sup>120</sup>

NBY was also advised that other NGOs in town were also providing emergency relief to Broome residents. But most of those NGOs were non-Indigenous entities.

<sup>119</sup> The Fund was announced by the State Government on 30 March 2020 to offer financial assistance to Western Australian (WA) sports, arts and community organisations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>120</sup> NBY did receive a small donation from Shell, and food donations from a local supplier.

NBY had a crucial advantage over these other NGOs in the town, because members knew or were related to NBY staff who were delivering information and care packs to them: "Trust was a crucial part of what enabled us to be so effective." (NBY Community Development Unit Manager 2021)

### Lack of coordination across social service providers in Broome

A senior NBY staff member involved in the emergency response that NBY provided observed that NBY was under pressure from Yawuru community members and other Broome-based NGOs to deliver emergency assistance to a wider cross-section of the community:

*And I was saying at the time, "...look we're doing everything we possibly can at the moment within our resources... first and foremost our responsibility here at NBY is to our members...But at the time really everybody (other NGOs in Broome) just retracted back to what they had to do, for practical reasons, we had very limited staff, we had limited PPE. All of that human resource piece and then how do we then safely support the vulnerable people that we're here to work with...So I had to really say, look we actually can't go beyond our brief. (NBY Community Development Unit Manager 2021)*

He observed a governance vacuum at the town level which pre-existed COVID, and whose impacts were manifest in limited networks to coordinate an emergency response to Broome's Aboriginal residents:

*We really needed our CEOs to pull together, at a grass roots level, but those networks just didn't exist. They still don't...we probably needed...a 'heads of everyone', every major organization in Broome, Centacare, KAMSC, the Shire, really having daily briefs at the very highest level<sup>121</sup>, getting the very, the most up to date information and having that comms go through...But as far as...a collegiate sort of response from the major organisations in town and service providers, I'm not aware that there is any coordinated response in place yet. (NBY Community Development Unit Manager 2021)*

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<sup>121</sup> Of course, daily briefings were occurring amongst some quarters, but information was generally not released to the public – or to frontline NGOs – except via official government announcement or media release.



## Conclusion

A pandemic response in a region like the Kimberley must be dictated by logistical considerations, epidemiological concerns and demographics – where does the population live, how do they live, and do they have the means to adopt measures to avoid the virus. The census is the only region-wide source of data, and it is commonly inaccurate. It also fails to capture the Aboriginal population in terms which are meaningful, such as connection to places, country, extended family networks and so forth. Planning a pandemic response in the absence of reliable population data, and in the absence of accurate data relating to community infrastructure was always going to be an exercise in guesswork.

These are all the more reason to work with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that know their constituency, and have the requisite relationships, to mobilise resources to where they are most needed.

Much of what we have documented in this report will be of no surprise to people familiar with the Kimberley. Remote community infrastructure is in a state of disrepair, avenues for communication with governments or service agencies are inadequate, many families continue to live below the poverty line so that food security is an ongoing issue in the absence of a pandemic, and overcrowding is endemic to the region.

Pre-pandemic, the relationship between Aboriginal leadership in the Kimberley, and governments who make decisions and develop policies on behalf of Aboriginal communities has been fraught, occasionally hostile and rarely functional or genuinely respectful. Avenues for partnership, community empowerment and self-determination have been inadequate or non-existent over the last decade.

The first wave of COVID-19 highlighted that avenues for communication with governments or service agencies can be built quickly and that some degree of government-supported coordination was necessary and brought improvements. However, this was reactive, short-term and patchy and was not collaborative. Even where ACCOs were contracted as members of the Emergency management response, the relationships were purely contractual.

Nonetheless, thousands of Aboriginal people mobilised by leaving towns and places that they deemed to be unsafe. Both they and those who remained in towns such as Halls Creek were supported by their organisations. Some received funding from the state government to assist them, while the COVID supplement payments from the Commonwealth helped underwrite the vast majority of this mass movement. This financial input ensured food security for an entire underclass in the region, and enabled families to provide reasonably good living environments, even when 'out bush'.

Fortunately, in 2020, case numbers in the Kimberley quickly fell away and the effectiveness of policy and health advice provided to Aboriginal people across the region was never tested – at the time of writing in late 2021, there still has not been a single COVID-19 case in an Aboriginal community or individual in the Kimberley.

2022 will likely see a very different scenario emerge.

We can only hope that, based on the detailed information provided by many remote communities via Pandemic Plans, WA government agencies now have detailed risk assessment maps for communities across the region, which incorporate information such as the state of housing, and of remote community infrastructure, of food security indicators and of vaccination rates.

Given a number of different variables emerging in 2022, including the highly contagious Omicron variant, and the reality that many Aboriginal people's incomes have returned to beneath the poverty line, the WA government 2020 directive to the Aboriginal people and communities of the region to 'be self-reliant' will not be repeated in 2022.

Advice emerging in late 2021 discourages Aboriginal people from 'going bush', yet governments might consider that the drive to self-reliance pre-existed the pandemic, and will likely still be there in 2022, despite advice now discouraging moves back to country.

Unlike in 2020, it appears that Aboriginal people will be discouraged from supplementing diets with bush foods and by hunting and fishing in 2022. For this and for a range of other issues emerging in late 2021, food security will likely become a major issue.

Aboriginal people and communities will need significant logistical, medical and other forms of support from government and non-government agencies to weather the coming pandemic storm. The necessary role of Aboriginal organisations across the region in facilitating these efforts, and ensuring that systems are working as efficiently as possible with the best possible information about Aboriginal people, families and communities, cannot be underestimated.

Protecting senior Aboriginal people should be an absolute priority of all systems being developed in preparedness for 2022.

## Postscript: How quickly the pandemic landscape can change

In mid-December, as the research team were winding down and preparing for some well-earned leave, discussions at a national level were turning to potential impact of the recently detected Omicron variant of COVID-19.

Omicron arrived in Australia in late November via some returned travellers from Southern Africa. From these two cases, as we prepare to release this report, some media outlets are reporting over one million cases of COVID per week, a remarkable figure given that the state of Western Australia remains, to the best of everyone's knowledge, Omicron-free. The numbers of cases are so high now in NSW and Victoria that some are deeming the case-load figures meaningless – because the assumption is that tens of thousands of people in these states have COVID, but are unable to access a test to confirm. Some, such as ABC's health journalist Norman Swan, suggest that Australia is underestimating its case load by between 5 and 10 fold. Swan describes as Australia, with regard to the COVID pandemic in mid Jan 2022, as a "policy free zone". (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-01-09/covid-omicron-cases-testing-a-million-cases/100744678>)

The "head in the sand" approach to limiting the impact of COVID, particularly on Australia's more vulnerable populations which includes but is in no way limited to remote Aboriginal people is of major concern. The lifting of restrictions has obviously seen Omicron spread extremely rapidly, but it has also seen the remnants of the much more virulent Delta variant spread also – the majority of cases at time of writing of people on ventilators in ICUs were in fact cases of the Delta variant.

As we stated at the outset, the authors of this report are not epidemiologists. Nonetheless it is apparent that the widely variable vaccination rates across Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley, combined with pre-existing health vulnerabilities and failing community infrastructure calls for a very particular response in this region. Once again, planning around how WA government agencies are preparing for the return of COVID to the region post February 5, when the state is due to open its borders to the rest of Australia, has not been transparent.

Being ultra-cautious would seem to be the best approach. Living with the virus does not mean pretending it doesn't exist, and in the case of Aboriginal populations in the Kimberley, very agile and responsive health and emergency systems will need to be in place if an outbreak – and many deaths – are to be avoided. That system may well have been established over the last year and half, but if it has, then to the best of our knowledge, Aboriginal people and communities have been minimally involved in its development.

This report summarises unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the region which mean that the population will respond to the threat of the next wave of COVID-19 differently.

We hope that our observations assist those whose role is to consider how best to protect Aboriginal communities and families from COVID-19, or to support and care for people once the case numbers start to rise, as they surely will after February 5, 2022.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Key dates in government(s) COVID responses<sup>122</sup>

This table provides a timeline of key dates in government COVID-19 responses in 2020. For context, other select events and activities relating to the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia have also been provided.

Date	Agency and jurisdiction	Measures relevant to Kimberley ACCOs and communities	ACCO and community initiated measures
<b>25 January 2020</b>	First confirmed case of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) reported in Australia, in Victoria <sup>123</sup>		
<b>30 Jan</b>	The World Health Organization (WHO) declares a Public Health Emergency of Global Concern		
<b>February</b>			Northern Territory land councils produce early messages in Aboriginal languages about COVID-19
<b>21 Feb</b>	First case of COVID reported in WA <sup>124</sup>		
<b>25 Feb</b>	Federal Government activates Emergency Response Plan for Communicable Disease Incidents of National Significance: National Arrangements		
<b>March</b>			Remote communities take action to close their own borders including the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands and some Cape York and Kimberley communities (see 30 March for Warmun in the East Kimberley)
<b>2 March</b>	First case of community transmission of COVID-19 in Australia. <sup>125</sup>		
<b>5 March</b>	Federal Government establishes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19, co-chaired by the Department of Health & the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation		
<b>9 March</b>	First case of person-to-person infection of COVID-19 in WA, in Perth <sup>126</sup>		
	Federal Government announces a \$2.4 billion health plan to address COVID-19	The package includes: \$58.7 million for increased capacity to prevent outbreaks in remote locations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	

<sup>122</sup> Keene, M. (2020). COVID-19 and Indigenous Australians: a chronology. Parliamentary Library Research Paper Series. Parliament of Australia. Campbell, Kelsey and Emma Vines (2021). COVID-19: a chronology of state and territory government announcements (up until June 30, 2020). Parliamentary Library Research Paper Series. Parliament of Australia.

<sup>123</sup> G Hunt (Minister for Health) and B Murphy (Australian Government CMO), First confirmed case of novel coronavirus in Australia, media release, 25 January 2020.

<sup>124</sup> <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/a-timeline-of-wa-s-covid-19-response-was-our-success-luck-good-management-or-a-bit-of-both-20200827-p55q03.html>

<sup>125</sup> G Hunt (Minister for Health) and B Murphy (Australian Government CMO), Update on COVID-19 in Australia—community transmission, media release, 2 March 2020.

<sup>126</sup> Cross, D. (2020). <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/fifth-wa-case-of-coronavirus-wa-woman-tests-positive-after-husband-returns-from-iran-20200309-p5487o.html>

Date	Agency and jurisdiction	Measures relevant to Kimberley ACCOs and communities	ACCO and community initiated measures
<b>11 March</b>	World Health Organisation declares the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic		
<b>12 March</b>	Federal Government announces \$17.6 billion economic plan	Economic package provides support to the most severely affected sectors, regions and communities; household stimulus payments in the form of a one-off \$750 stimulus payment to pensioners, social security, veteran and other income support recipients and eligible concession card holders; small & medium sized business (for retaining staff etc.)	
<b>13 March</b>	The Prime Minister (PM) announces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The formation of National Cabinet on coronavirus comprised of the PM, premiers and chief ministers, to meet weekly.</li> <li>• Travel advice for all Australians travelling overseas raised to 'Level 3: Reconsider your need for travel'.</li> </ul>		
<b>14 March</b>			Northern Land Council (NLC) suspends all permits for non-essential travel on Aboriginal land in the northern half of mainland Northern Territory (roughly Darwin to Elliot).
<b>15 March</b>	First National Cabinet meets	Measures announced include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All people entering Australia required to self-isolate for 14 days</li> <li>• A ban on cruise ships from foreign ports arriving at Australian ports</li> <li>• Additional social distancing requirements including a ban on non-essential gatherings of more than 500 people.</li> </ul>	
	WA Government - Section 56 of the Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA)	Chief Health Officer (State Human Epidemic Controller) Declares a State of Emergency	
<b>16 March</b>			Central Land Council calls for cancelling of all non-essential travel to remote communities in its region.
	The WA Government announces a \$607 million package to support WA households and small businesses, which included: \$402 million to freeze household fees and charges and a \$114 million payroll tax announcement for small and medium businesses. <sup>127</sup>		

<sup>127</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier) and B Wyatt (WA Treasurer), COVID-19 economic response: relief for businesses and households, media release, 16 March 2020.



Date	Agency and jurisdiction	Measures relevant to Kimberley ACCOs and communities	ACCO and community initiated measures
17 March	Second National Cabinet meeting	A ban on non-essential indoor gatherings of greater than 100 people; further restrictions on outdoor gatherings; and enhanced arrangements to protect older Australians in Residential Aged Care Facilities.	
			Central Land Council calls for suspension of government's work-for-the-dole scheme (Community Development Program) & cancels mineral exploration & tourism permits in its region. AMSANT called for same things.
18 March	WA's Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs release the Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions that include restricting access in and out of remote Aboriginal communities. <sup>128</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforceable Directions to restrict access in and out of remote Aboriginal communities. Exceptions include access for medical reasons, emergencies and obtaining essential services and supplies, ensuring food security</li> <li>• To be supported by the development of Remote Community Pandemic Plans in partnership with community leaders</li> </ul>	
20 March	WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announces the Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions #2. <sup>129</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule of relevant remote communities across the state released.</li> <li>• Amended Directions provide clarity over who can enter remote Aboriginal communities</li> <li>• Development of Remote Community Pandemic Plans announced – to be "developed in partnership with community leaders"</li> </ul>	
	Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs announces National Cabinet has given in-principle approval for the Health Minister to take action under the Commonwealth Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth) pursuant to restricting access to remote communities. <sup>130</sup>	Under the Directions, a person can only enter or remain on the land or waters if they are returning to the community where they normally reside or work, for family and cultural purposes, to provide or access essential or human services or supplies, in an emergency, or if authorised by the Police Commissioner or an authorised officer.	
			In a release by Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, Aboriginal leaders call on the Northern Territory government to declare the NT and adjoining remote areas of South Australia and Western Australia a special controlled area to protect Aboriginal communities.

<sup>128</sup> <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/03/New-Directions-to-protect-remote-Aboriginal-communities-from-COVID-19.aspx>

<sup>129</sup> Wyatt, B. (WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs). (2020). Updated Directions provide further clarity to remote Aboriginal communities, media release, 21 March. <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/03/Updated-Directions-provide-further-clarity-to-remote-Aboriginal-communities.aspx>

<sup>130</sup> Ken Wyatt (Minister for Indigenous Australians) (2020). Reducing the spread of COVID-19 to Indigenous communities, Media statement 20 March. <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2F255914%22>.

Date	Agency and jurisdiction	Measures relevant to Kimberley ACCOs and communities	ACCO and community initiated measures
	JobSeeker Payment replaces Newstart Allowance and several other payments from this date. <sup>131</sup>		
<b>22 March</b>	Federal Government announces a second package as part of its COVID-19 Economic response. <sup>132</sup>	<p>The package includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social security measures such as</li> <li>• support for workers and households through the coronavirus supplement of \$550 per fortnight that would be paid to 'both existing and new recipients of the JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance jobseeker, Parenting Payment, Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit'. The supplement will be paid for six months and almost doubles the maximum payment rate for a JobSeeker Payment recipient.</li> <li>• Support to households through a second \$750 payment to social security and veteran income support recipients and eligible concession card holders</li> <li>• Early release of superannuation (\$10,000 in 2019–20 and a further \$10,000 in 2020–21) for those experiencing financial hardship</li> <li>• Temporary reduction of the minimum superannuation minimum drawdown requirements</li> </ul>	
<b>23 March</b>	National Indigenous Australians Agency suspends Community Development Program mutual obligations. <sup>133</sup>		
<b>24 March</b>	WA Government introduces border controls for road, rail, air & sea. <sup>134</sup>	Arrivals from interstate will be ordered to self-isolate for 14 days. Exemptions will apply to essential services & workers as well as being granted on compassionate grounds & where people live near border communities.	
	Federal Government announces that mutual obligation requirements for job seekers will be lifted until 31 March 2020. <sup>135</sup>		

<sup>131</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/New\\_coronavirus\\_supplement](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/New_coronavirus_supplement)

<sup>132</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/New\\_coronavirus\\_supplement](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/New_coronavirus_supplement)

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/announcements/community-development-programme>

<sup>134</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), New border controls to help protect Western Australia, media release, 22 March 2020.

<sup>135</sup> M Cash (Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business) and A Ruston (Minister for Families and Social Services), Mutual obligations lifted until congestion clears, media release, 24 March 2020.



Date	Agency and jurisdiction	Measures relevant to Kimberley ACCOs and communities	ACCO and community initiated measures
First two coronavirus cases in the Kimberley, in Broome			
<b>25 March</b>	WA Government places temporary limits on takeaway alcohol across the state. <sup>136</sup>	Under the changes, takeaway alcohol will be limited to the following amounts, per customer, each day: one carton of beer, cider or pre-mixed spirits; or three bottles of wine; or one litre of spirits; or one litre of fortified wine; or a combination of any two of the above (but not a combination of two of the same product).	
<b>26 March</b>	Commonwealth and WA government partner to implement new restrictions for access to designated regions of WA, enforceable through emergency determination powers under the Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth). <sup>137</sup>	From 26 March, to protect people in the Kimberley and in remote Aboriginal communities, access will be restricted into the following regions of WA, with limited special exemptions: Kimberley (comprising all four local government areas); Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku; and parts of the Shire of East Pilbara that encompass the communities of Jigalong, Martu homeland communities and Kiwirrkurra. The designated areas account for approximately 1/3 of the geographical area of WA; and almost 90% of WA's remote communities and remote Aboriginal population. Within the designated regions and for all remote Aboriginal communities outside these designated regions, the WA Government's Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions will continue to apply. Under these arrangements, after 9pm on Thursday, March 26, 2020, any person who is outside a designated region can only enter that region if that person is providing essential services or supplies; or has been quarantined from the general public for the previous 14 days.	
			Kimberley Aboriginal COVID-19 Taskforce <sup>138</sup> forms specifically to focus on issues pertaining to COVID-19 that fall outside of the current health response being managed in the region by Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service
<b>30 March</b>	The Premier announces the establishment of a \$159 million COVID-19 Relief Fund with Lotterywest. <sup>139</sup>	Funding for crisis and emergency relief support available to eligible not-for-profit and community organisations.	Warmun Community closes. <sup>140</sup>

<sup>136</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), COVID-19 response: Temporary changes to takeaway alcohol, media release, 25 March 2020 <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/03/COVID-19-response-Temporary-changes-to-takeaway-alcohol.aspx>

<sup>137</sup> G Hunt (Minister for Health) and K Wyatt (Minister for Indigenous Australians), Travel restrictions for remote areas commence tonight, media release, 26 March 2020.  
Access restricted to protect people living in the Kimberley and remote Aboriginal communities

<sup>138</sup> Taskforce Members: Tyrone Garstone (Chair, Deputy CEO, KLC); Lawford Benning (Chair, MG Corporation, East Kimberley); Peter Yu (CEO, NBY, Broome); Raymond Christophers (Chair, Nirimbuk); Millie Hills (Chair, Yura Yungi AMS, Halls Creek); Maureen Carter (CEO, Nindilinggarri Cultural Health Service, Fitzroy Crossing); Dickie Bedford (CEO, MWW, Fitzroy Crossing); Susan Murphy (CEO, Winun Ngari AC, Derby); Des Hill (CEO, KWAC, Kununurra); Gordon Marshall (Chair, KALACC); Vicki O'Donnell (CEO, KAMS).

<sup>139</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), \$159 million COVID-19 Relief Fund to provide crisis support, media release, 30 March 2020.

<sup>140</sup> <https://www.halls creek.wa.gov.au/council/sohc-news-and-public-notice?item=id:29hc0nbn717q9srnh4ns2>

Date	Agency and jurisdiction	Measures relevant to Kimberley ACCOs and communities	ACCO and community initiated measures
<b>From 31 March</b>	Federal Department of Social Services	Eligible people receive a one-off payment of \$750	Binarri Binyja Yarrowoo/ Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council/Empowered Communities released first COVID update
	State Government announces a \$1 billion COVID-19 economic and health relief package, with measures to be in place until 30 September 2020, and reviewed when necessary. <sup>141</sup>	The measures include: further relief for households experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19, including extension of the Energy Assistance Payment; no disconnections of power and water; waiving of interest and/ or late payment fees for some taxes; and additional support for customers of government low-deposit home loans; support for community service providers, including reduced electricity bills and funding certainty from government agencies continuing to pay contracts with the sector and an additional \$500 million allocated to health and other frontline service delivery, and capacity for additional industry support.	
<b>1 April</b>	First cases to test positive in the East Kimberley, one in Halls Creek and one in Kununurra. Number of confirmed cases in the region to 12 (including three health workers in Broome). <sup>142</sup>		
<b>2 April</b>	WA Premier announces additional Kimberley travel restrictions to stop the movement of people between towns & local government areas. <sup>143</sup>	Travel is heavily restricted between all four local government areas within the Kimberley region (shires of Broome, Derby West Kimberley, Wyndham East Kimberley and Halls Creek). Kimberley residents are urged to stay within their boundary, and all non-essential travel should be avoided. Some exemptions apply.	
	Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians announces \$123 million over two years to support Indigenous communities and businesses in their responses to COVID-19.	This includes: \$10 million to Community Night Patrol to assist in ensuring community safety including support to providers to expand or alter current services in relation to travel restrictions and social distancing requirements, and \$23 million from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to enhance Indigenous social programs whose delivery is impacted by COVID-19.	
<b>5 April</b>	WA border closed. <sup>144</sup> Premier announces further border restrictions, with people no longer being able to enter WA without an exemption.		

<sup>141</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier) and B Wyatt (WA Treasurer), \$1 billion COVID-19 economic and health relief package unveiled, media release, 31 March 2020.

<sup>142</sup> <https://www.kimberleyecho.com.au/news/the-kimberley-echo/kimberley-covid-19-cases-double-overnight-ng-b881507160z>

<sup>143</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), Stronger restrictions in place to protect Kimberley residents from COVID-19, media release, 2 April 2020.

<sup>144</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), Temporary border closure to better protect Western Australians, media release, 2 April 2020.



Date	Agency and jurisdiction	Measures relevant to Kimberley ACCOs and communities	ACCO and community initiated measures
<b>By 6 April</b>	13 reported cases in the Kimberley, 10 in Broome, one in Halls Creek and two in Kununurra. Six have been health workers. <sup>145</sup>		
<b>7 April</b>	Department of Premier and Cabinet establishes Complex Task Team, Remote Aboriginal Communities.		
<b>9 April</b>	Another two healthcare workers test positive for COVID-19 in Halls Creek. <sup>146</sup>		
<b>20 April</b>	WA Government lifts alcohol restrictions across the state.		
<b>26 April</b>	Premier confirms that there are no active COVID-19 cases in the Kimberley, with all those to have been infected now recovered.		
	The WA Government announces the easing of some restrictions, including indoor and outdoor non-work gatherings being relaxed to enable up to 10 people. <sup>147</sup>		
<b>From 27 April</b>	Commonwealth Department of Social Services	Coronavirus supplement of \$550 per fortnight provided for six months for eligible people. <sup>148</sup>	
<b>By end of April</b>	A total of 18 cases in the Kimberley, but all cleared by the end of April – no more cases in the Kimberley. <sup>149</sup>		
<b>10 May</b>	WA Government releases roadmap for easing COVID-19 restrictions, with Phase 1 having commenced on 27 April, and further restrictions set to ease on 18 May. <sup>150</sup>	Changes include indoor and outdoor non-work gatherings being lifted to 20 people and people being encouraged to return to work unless they are unwell or vulnerable.	
<b>15 May</b>	Liquor restrictions reinstated in the Kimberley following submissions to Department following consultation with the Commissioner of Police.		Decision taken in response to intense lobbying from a number of groups across the region, including KAHPF, and members of the Aboriginal taskforce.
<b>17 May</b>	WA Government revokes the prohibition on travel between local government districts in the Kimberley.		
<b>19 May</b>	The Kimberley Regional Group joins key regional leaders to provide the Premier with a 12-point plan for a COVID Safe reopening of the Kimberley border next month. <sup>151</sup>		

<sup>145</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-09/kimberley-coronavirus-fears-as-more-health-workers-positive/12137044>

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-09/kimberley-coronavirus-fears-as-more-health-workers-positive/12137044>

<sup>147</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier) and R Cook (WA Minister for Health), Cautious easing of restrictions thanks to WA's COVID-19 progress, media release, 26 April 2020.

<sup>148</sup> Eligible people included: JobSeeker Payment (which used to be known as the NewStart Allowance), Sickness Allowance, Youth Allowance for jobseekers, Parenting Payment Partnered/single, as well as those on Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy.

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.ahcwa.org.au/copy-of-coronavirus-updates>

<sup>150</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier) and R Cook (WA Minister for Health), The WA roadmap for easing COVID-19 restrictions, media release, 10 May 2020.

<sup>151</sup> <https://www.swek.wa.gov.au/news/kimberley-leaders-unite-on-a-12-point-covidsafe-plan-to-reopen/948>

Date	Agency and jurisdiction	Measures relevant to Kimberley ACCOs and communities	ACCO and community initiated measures
<b>25 May</b>	WA Government announces that regional travel boundaries would be further reduced, with only regions bound by the Commonwealth's designated biosecurity determination and 274 remote Aboriginal communities remaining restricted. <sup>152</sup>	Eligible people receive a one-off payment of \$750	Binarri Binyja Yarrowoo/ Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council/Empowered Communities released first COVID update
	WA Minister for Culture and Arts announced a \$1.5 million support package to help artists. <sup>153</sup>		
<b>29 May</b>	The WA Government announces Phase 3 of the roadmap to ease COVID-19 restrictions would come into effect from 6 June 2020.	Changes include allowing non-work indoor and outdoor gatherings of up to 100 people at any one time, per single undivided space, up to a total of 300 people per venue.	
<b>4 June</b>	Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions #3 announced by WA Minister for Emergency Services	Much more finely grained detail about who is allowed in, & also provisions relating to exemptions.	
<b>5 June</b>	Federal Government agrees to remove the Commonwealth Biosecurity travel restrictions so the Kimberley, Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku and parts of the East Pilbara can reopen to the rest of WA. <sup>154</sup>	Nb. The WA Government continued to provide ongoing protection of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through its own Remote Aboriginal Communities Direction.	
<b>22 June</b>	WA Government announces Phase 4 easing of restrictions would start on 27 June.	Changes include gathering limits only being determined by the 2 square metre rule, and major sporting and entertainment venues to have a 50% capacity rule.	
<b>3 August</b>	From this date, WA Government grants exemptions to some Aboriginal communities, allowing access.		

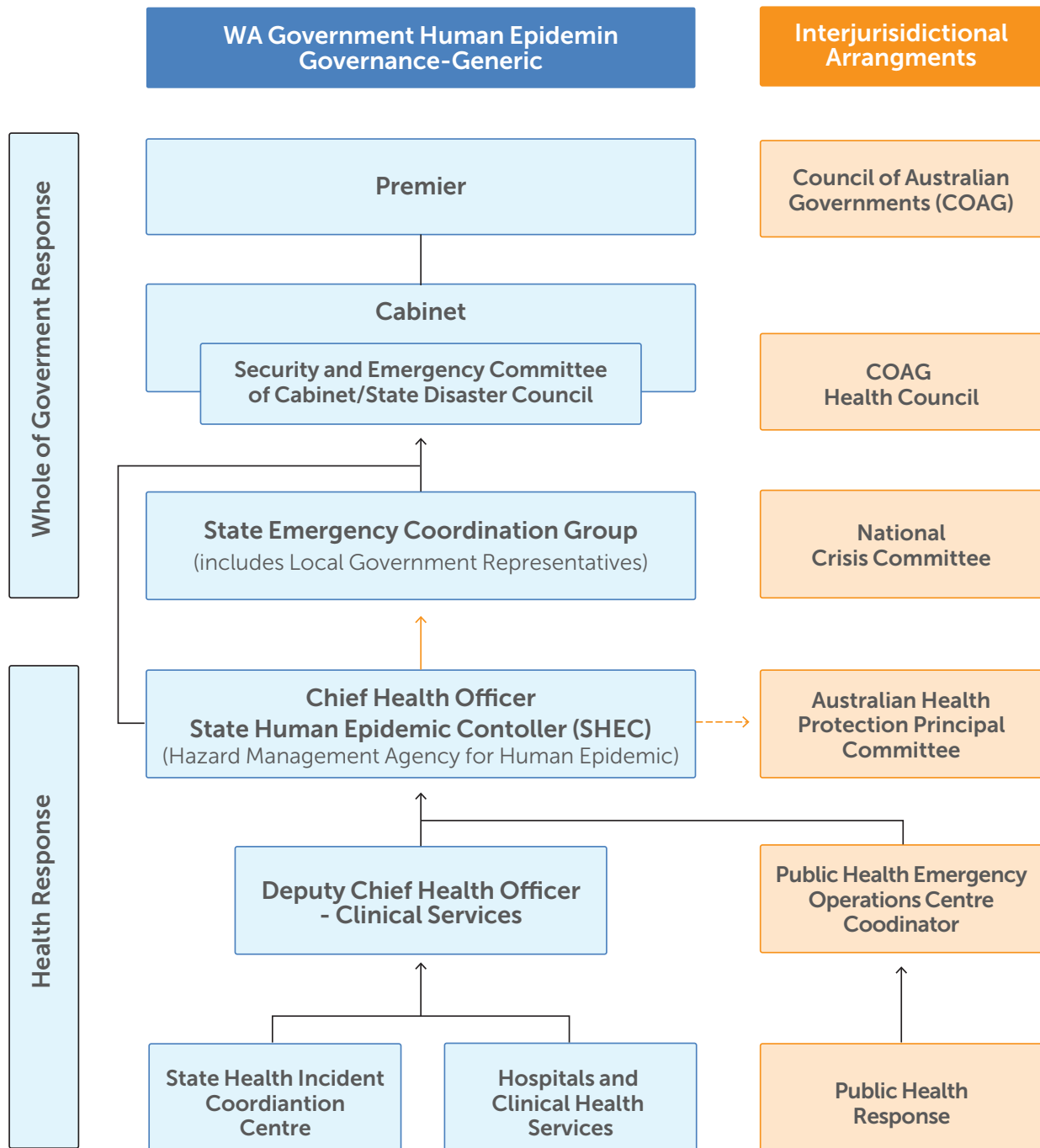
<sup>152</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier) and R Cook (WA Minister for Health), Regional travel restrictions to be lifted as part of WA roadmap, media release, 25 May 2020.

<sup>153</sup> D Templeman (WA Minister for Culture and the Arts), Support for WA artists through \$1.5 million COVID support program, media release, 25 May 2020.

<sup>154</sup> M McGowan (WA Premier), R Cook (WA Minister for Health) and B Wyatt (WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs), Kimberley to reopen to the rest of Western Australia, media release, 4 June 2020.



## Appendix 2: Western Australian governance arrangements and interaction with the Australian Government



## Appendix 3: Local Pandemic Action Plan Template<sup>155</sup>

This planning template is based on the Western Australian Government Pandemic Plan and is designed to assist remote Aboriginal communities who do not have already have a pandemic action plan in place.

Deciding on how your community will manage each of the challenges and talking about it before COVID-19 infection occurs is important so that everyone is informed and prepared.

### Each community knows what is best for its people.

This plan is designed to help bring together the resources, contacts and information needed to respond to COVID-19. You can decide what else should be included and you do not have to use this plan if you already have a local plan in place.

### Be prepared to update the plan regularly.

It is not known if and when a COVID-19 infection may occur so this planning needs to be done quickly. The plan may need to change as the situation changes.

### You are not in this alone.

The State Government is able to support and assist remote communities in preparing a plan and will work with you in responding to the pandemic. District and Local Emergency Management Committees and health services will ensure that this plan covers all the necessary arrangements.

## [Location] Local Pandemic Action Plan

Location
Describe communities and areas covered by this plan. There is no need for every community to have its own individual plan. If it makes sense for you to work together with neighbouring communities please do so. "This plan covers..."
Local Approval:
Name of person or organisation who approves this plan on behalf of the location. "This plan has been approved by...."

## Introduction

This Local Pandemic Action Plan sets out how we will respond to a pandemic situation.

It has been completed with the input of key community stakeholders and Local Emergency Management Committee members.

Key information for the location covered by this plan is set out below.

**Population:** This should include the total population as well as description of how many older people, children or people with a disability are covered by this plan. This does not have to be exact if not known. This is about making sure everyone who might have specific or additional needs is included.

**High risk conditions:** Some people may be at higher risk of infection, such as people who have other illnesses that suppress the immune system or make them more vulnerable to respiratory disease. This includes people with lung disease or diabetes, those who have suppressed immune systems, and the elderly. You should consider whether there are any people who are affected by high risk medical conditions.

<sup>155</sup> This is an exact copy of the template that was sent to remote community CEOs and leaders in late March 2020.



**Health services:** Where do you normally access health services? Does the location have a health clinic or nurses?

**Critical supplies:** How do you normally access food and medical supplies? Who is responsible for providing power, water and wastewater services?

**Emergency accommodation or evacuation:** Are there existing places that residents use to shelter in case of emergency? Are there buildings or facilities that could be used for quarantine or additional medical support?

**Access:** How can your location be accessed? Is there an airstrip or access roads? Are these regularly impacted by weather or flooding? How do supplies normally reach your location?

**Communications arrangements:** Are there suitable telecommunications and internet arrangements at your location?

**Service providers and others:** What service providers regularly visit or reside in the location?

**Cultural considerations:** What do you want service providers and people from other areas to know about accessing your location and how they can work together with you.

## Prevention

We will be doing the following to protect our community members:

You should include:

- Any messages or information to be given to community members.
- Any arrangements for people visiting your location.

Your local health service will assist you in this and current health information is also available from [www.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.health.wa.gov.au) and the helpline on 1800 020 080.

Responding to suspected cases

If we suspect that a person may have COVID-19 we will respond by:

You should consider:

- Identifying a place where people can be safely isolated while waiting for medical assistance.
- How you will notify local health services.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The following people have a role in preparing for and responding to the pandemic.

Identify and list key contacts who can assist you. As a minimum the plan should clearly identify the contacts for:

- Local Emergency Management Committee;
- Health Service;
- Local Government;
- School; and
- Police.

## Contacts and communication

All communication about this plan should be directed to: [Name and contact details]

All emergency communication should be directed to: [Name and contact details]

This plan will be communicated to residents and visitors by: **This could include existing groups, social media, community centre, School, Art Centre, Community Centre, Womens Centre.**

The infographic is titled "COVID-19 Update for the Kimberley" and is dated Thursday, 7 May 2020. It features the WA Country Health Service logo and a map of the Kimberley region. The "Data" section includes a bar chart and the following statistics: 0 new cases, 17 recovered cases, 0 active cases, 28 days since last confirmed case, and 1,378 total tests performed. A "Be healthy and keep safe" section lists three key messages: avoid groups, seek medical treatment locally, and get vaccinated against influenza. A note explains a change in reporting methodology for COVID-19 tests. An acknowledgement of country is provided at the bottom.

Category	Value
Number of new cases	0
Number of recovered cases	17
Number of active cases	0
Number of days since last confirmed case	28
Total number of tests performed	1,378*

**Be healthy and keep safe**

- Don't gather in groups, stay 2 arms' length away from people and regularly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds throughout the day.
- If you need medical treatment, it's important you still attend your local hospital, health service or clinic – they're safe places to be.
- Now, more than ever, it's also important to consider getting vaccinated against influenza.
- For up-to-date COVID-19 coronavirus information and advice, visit the Healthy WA website <https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/> or call 13 COVID (13 26843).

\*Note: There has been a change to the way Western Australia reports on the number of COVID-19 tests carried out. WA is now reporting on the number of tests performed, rather than the number of people tested, in line with a new nationally-agreed approach.

**Acknowledgement of Country** The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

Provided daily updates – complex task team...



## Appendix 4: Table of communities, their primary health care service provider (PHC) and Environmental Health Service Provider (EHSP) (As of June 2019)

Community	PHC	EHSP
One Arm Point	WACHS remote clinics	Nirrumbuk
Lombadina / Djarindjin	WACHS remote clinics	Nirrumbuk
Looma	WACHS remote clinics	Looma Community Inc. / SDWK
Warmun	WACHS remote clinics	HC Shire / KPHU
Kalumburu	WACHS remote clinics	KPHU
Mowanjum	DAHS	SDWK
Wyndham	KNX WACHS CHC	KPHU
Wangkatjunga Community / Wangkatjunga Clinic	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Ngumpun Community / Wangkatjunga Clinic	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Bayulu Community / Bayulu Clinic	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Karnparmi Community / Bayulu Clinic	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Joy Springs Community / Bayulu Clinic	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Gillarong Community / Bayulu Clinic	FVHS WACHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Muludja Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Loanbun Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Kurnangki Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Mindi Rardi Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Ngurtawarta Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Bungardi Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
DarIngunaya Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Buruwa Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Biridi Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Junjuwa Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Galamunda Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Jimbalakudunj Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Ngalingkadji Community	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK

Community	PHC	EHSP
Djugerari Community / Djugerari Community Clinic	RFDS / WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Kadjina Community / Kadjina Community Clinic	RFDS / WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Koorabye Community / Ngalapita School	RFDS / WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Yakanarra Community / Yakanarra Community Clinic	RFDS / WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	RFDS / WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri
Yungngora Community / Noonkanbah Clinic	WACHS / FVHS / KPHU / Nindilingarri	Nindilingarri / SDWK
Pullout Springs Community	YY AMS? HC WACHS CHC	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Yiyili / Yiyili Community Clinic	YY AMS? HC WACHS CHC	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Ganinyi Community	HC WACHS CHC	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Moongardi Community	HC WACHS CHC / FVHS / KPHU	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Kupartiya Community	HC WACHS CHC / FVHS / KPHU	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Bawooroogah Community	HC WACHS CHC / FVHS / KPHU	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Mingingkala Community	HC WACHS CHC / FVHS / KPHU	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Mimbi Community	HC WACHS CHC / FVHS / KPHU	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Galeru Gorge Community	HC WACHS CHC / FVHS / KPHU	HC Shire / Nindilingarri
Yurmulun (Pandanus Park)	DAHS	SDWK
Bidyadanga	KAMS	Nirrumbuk
Beagle Bay	KAMS	Nirrumbuk
Balgo	KAMS	Nirrumbuk
Mulan	KAMS	Nirrumbuk
Bililuna	KAMS	Nirrumbuk
Kununurra communities	OVAHS	Nirrumbuk / KPHU
	KNC CHC	Nirrumbuk / KPHU
Halls Creek communities	YY AMS	HC Shire
	HC WACHS CHC	HC Shire
Derby communities	DAHS	SDWK
	Derby WACHS CHC	SDWK
Broome and communities	BRAMS	Nirrumbuk*
	Broome WACHS CHC	Nirrumbuk*
Gibb River Rd communities	DAHS	SDWK
Mornington Station and Mt House Station	RFDS	SDWK
Doogan Theda Station	RFDS	KPHU
Drysdale River Station	RFDS	KPHU

\* EH Referral capacity is for designated projects or specific for remote community residents.



## Appendix 5: Lotterywest grant, Kimberley ACCOs, 2020<sup>156</sup>

1	25/01/2021	Broome Youth and Families Hub incorporated	Towards costs to support a mental health counsellor for young people and families who are at-risk and vulnerable due to COVID-19 living in Broome.	\$284,714	Broome
2	30/10/2020	Kullarri Regional Communities Indigenous Corporation	Towards an early intervention project to support young Aboriginal people in Broome to transition to training and employment.	\$56,106	Broome
3	30/10/2020	Yawuru Jarndu Aboriginal Corporation	To support the community of Yawuru Aboriginal women to enhance connection to their culture and increase their sense of belonging in the Kimberley region.	\$13,560	Broome
4	5/06/2020	Feed the Little Children Inc.	To support the immediate needs of Aboriginal families and children experiencing hardship and disadvantage in Broome and surrounding communities.	\$43,600	Broome
5	22/05/2020	Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (Aboriginal Corporation)	To support the immediate needs of vulnerable people experiencing financial hardship and at risk of infection of COVID-19 in Broome and the surrounding remote communities.	\$45,000	Broome
6	22/05/2020	Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Limited	To support the immediate needs of people experiencing financial hardship, reducing vulnerability and disadvantage in the Kimberley region.	\$30,000	Broome
7	5/05/2020	Broome Community Information Resource Centre and Learning Exchange	To support the immediate needs of people experiencing financial hardship, reducing vulnerability and disadvantage in Broome and surrounding communities.	\$57,000	Broome
8	4/03/2020*	Broome Lotteries House Incorporated	Towards a community garden and nature play area to support early childhood development and community education.	\$113,000	Broome
9	4/03/2020*	Broome Youth and Families Hub Incorporated	Towards outdoor activity areas and a bus to support programs for children, families and young people in Broome.	\$162,823	Broome
10	4/03/2020*	*Kimberley Land Council Aboriginal Corporation	Towards vehicles and project costs to enhance the work of Kimberley Ranger Groups in providing environmental land and marine care.	\$711,871	Broome
11	4/03/2020*	Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation	Towards vehicles for support activities to enhance the wellbeing of the Stolen Generation and their families in the Kimberley.	\$91,836	Broome

<sup>156</sup> Data provided by LotteryWest, but publicly available during 2020.

12	25/01/2021	Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation	Towards a vehicle and equipment for night time support services to young people in Derby.	\$50,000	Derby
13	25/01/2021	Shire of Derby-West Kimberley	Towards a community engagement project with Wharfinger House Museum to conserve history and reconnect with community.	\$29,659	Derby
14	18/12/2020	Looma Community Incorporated	Towards facilities and programs that provide opportunities for families and young people to come together in Looma.	\$315,056	Derby
15	3/08/2020	Looma Community Incorporated	Towards bedding and winter clothing for people experiencing financial hardship in Looma.	\$40,282	Derby
16	5/05/2020	Ngunga Group Women's Aboriginal Corporation	To support the immediate needs of people experiencing financial hardship, reducing vulnerability and disadvantage in Derby and West Kimberley.	\$144,232	Derby
17	18/12/2020	Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC	Towards the implementation of the Bunuba Digital Strategy to strengthen language and culture, develop social enterprise and enhance land management activities.	\$624,666	Fitzroy Crossing
18	18/12/2020	Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (Aboriginal Corporation)	Towards implementation of the Mabu Jila platform to capture, store, secure and transmit traditional Kimberley Aboriginal culture.	\$428,709	Fitzroy Crossing
19	3/08/2020	Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation	To support the immediate needs of vulnerable people experiencing hardship in remote communities in the Fitzroy Valley in the Kimberley as a result of COVID-19.	\$256,114	Fitzroy Crossing
20	18/12/2020	Little Nuggets Early Learning Centre Inc.	To provide early childhood education and parenting support for Aboriginal families with children aged 0-4 years in Halls Creek and surrounding communities.	\$68,456	Halls Creek
21	18/12/2020	Shire of Halls Creek	Towards the implementation the 'On-Track' alternative education and enterprise program to support young people in Halls Creek and surrounding remote communities.	\$381,250	Halls Creek
22	3/08/2020	Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation	To support the immediate needs of people experiencing financial hardship in the Balgo area.	\$27,648	Halls Creek



23	19/06/2020	Shire of Halls Creek	To support the immediate needs of Aboriginal people and other residents experiencing financial hardship in Halls Creek and surrounding remote communities.	\$60,000	Halls Creek
24	4/03/2020*	Shire of Halls Creek	Towards a water splash park to provide opportunities for children and young people to recreate and gather in a safe, accessible and fun environment in Halls Creek.	\$505,000	Halls Creek
25	22/05/2020	Kalamburu Aboriginal Corporation	To support the immediate needs of people experiencing hardship, reducing vulnerability and disadvantage in Kalamburu.	\$24,247	Kalamburu
26	18/12/2020	Binarri-binyja yarrowoo Aboriginal Corporation	Towards a sector development initiative to strengthen and improve capability of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in the East Kimberley.	\$197,000	Kununurra
27	30/11/2020	Ord Valley Events Inc	Towards a free community event to support people to celebrate the vibrancy of Kununurra.	\$144,232	Derby
28	22/09/2020	Kandiwal (Aboriginal Corporation)	To support the immediate needs of people experiencing financial hardship, reducing vulnerability and disadvantage in the remote East Kimberley region.	\$70,750	Kununurra
29	22/05/2020	Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgab Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation	Towards equipment to support volunteers undertake conservation activities and rehabilitate native wildlife in the East Kimberley.	\$46,000	Kununurra
30	4/03/2020*	Roy's Retreat Inc.	Towards equipment to support volunteers undertake conservation activities and rehabilitate native wildlife in the East Kimberley.	\$58,023	Kununurra
31	5/06/2020	Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation	Towards crisis relief to support Aboriginal people experiencing food insecurity in the Djarindjin community and surrounding areas on the Dampier Peninsula.	\$43,119	Via Broome
32	28/04/2020	Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation	Towards a vehicle to support youth and Elder programs for the Djarindjin community.	\$70,566	Via Broome
33	25/01/2021	Western Australian Aboriginal Leadership Institute Limited	Towards project costs to support Aboriginal Leadership and cultural programs.	\$404,500	West Perth
34	18/12/2020	Western Australian Aboriginal Leadership Institute Limited	Towards the sustainability and resilience of the organisation, which will improve outcomes for Aboriginal Leaders.	\$131,540	West Perth
35	5/06/2020	Stopping Family Violence Inc.	To support women and children experiencing an increase in family domestic violence in Derby as a result of COVID-19.	\$101,418	West Perth

36	22/05/2020	Joongari House/Wyndham Family Support Incorporated	To support the immediate needs of people experiencing financial hardship in Wyndham.	\$5,200	Wyndham
37	28/04/2020	Wyndham Early Learning Activity Centre (WELA) Incorporated	Towards a bus to support families in Wyndham to access parenting and early childhood programs and activities.	\$62,548	Wyndham
38	3/08/2020	Mangunampi Mangarri Incorporated	Towards bedding and winter clothing for people experiencing financial hardship in Looma.	\$83,229	Yakanarra

*\*These dates, while reported as part of the WA government's emergency response funding, were clearly funded prior to the first wave of COVID 19 in the region. Data was made publicly available on LotteryWest website in 2020/2021.*

## Appendix 6: WA State Emergency Management Plan Committee

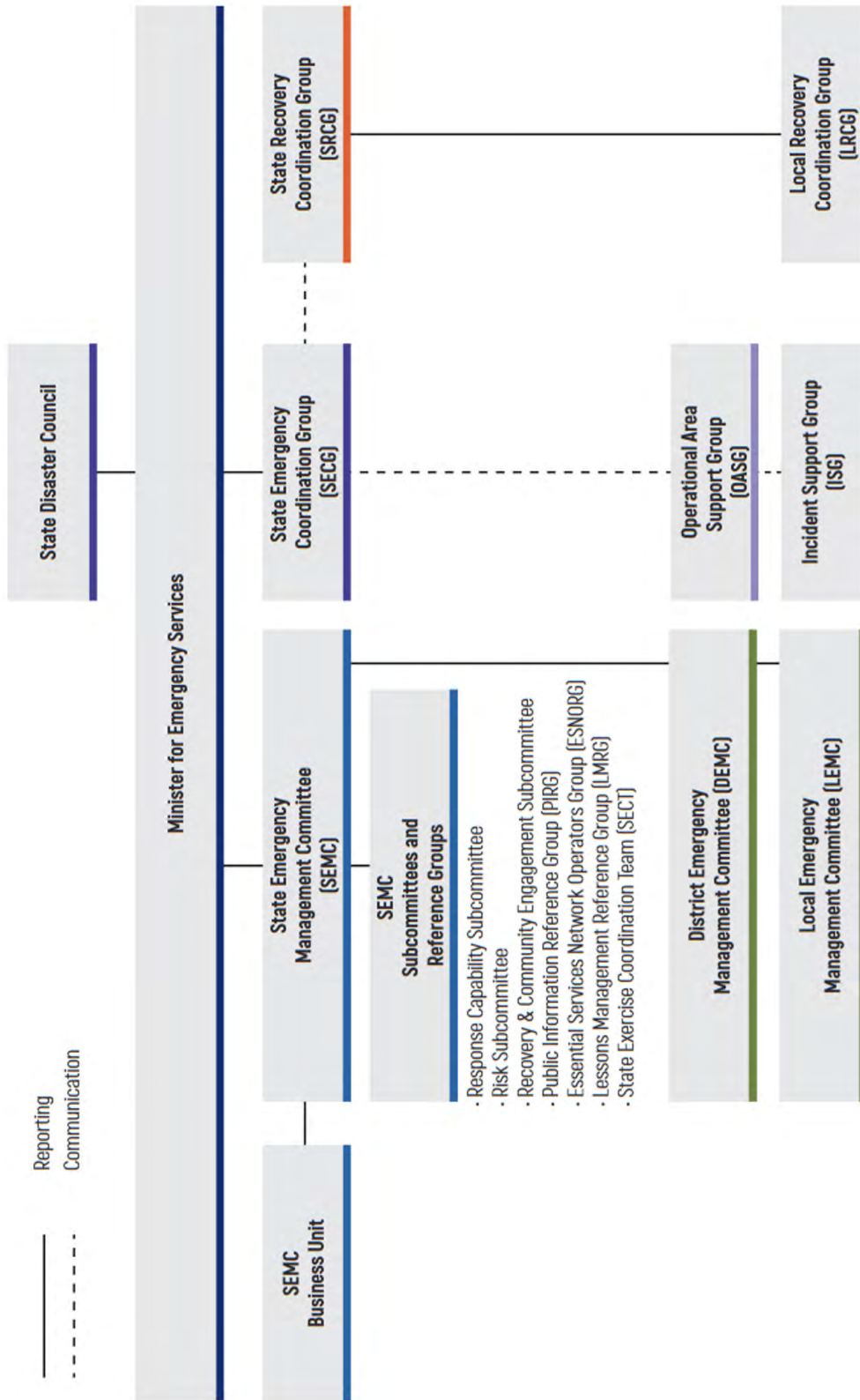


Figure 1: SEMC Committee Structure

Source: STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: A Strategic Framework for Emergency Management in Western Australia: <https://semc.wa.gov.au/emergency-management/plans/state-em-plan/Documents/StateEMPlan.pdf>

## Appendix 7: District Leadership Groups – East and West Kimberley

In 2016, the Kimberley was the first region to establish District Leadership Groups (DLGs) in the East & West Kimberley, a forum that has representation from Commonwealth, State & Local Government, Aboriginal Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and non-government groups. The DLGs explore regional operational issues and initiatives and develop and lead on-the-ground responses to achieve local outcomes.

Following the February 2020 Combined DLG Forum held in Broome, and the declaration of a State of Emergency, the DLG meetings were suspended to focus all efforts towards the prevention, containment and management of the COVID-19 pandemic within the Kimberley region

To manage the Department of Communities' (Communities) responsibilities in relation to COVID-19, the Kimberley Region established an Incident Management / Local Welfare Response team. Communities partnered with Remote Aboriginal Communities to develop Pandemic Plans which focused on prevention, containment and response to COVID including consideration of any available infrastructure in the community that could be utilised if required. The revision of these plans and their considerations is currently being undertaken by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Communities' State Welfare Incident Control Centre, in collaboration with local Communities staff.

Between February and June 2020, the functionality of the DLG Membership was still effectively leveraged to provide regular updates on the WA Government's response to COVID-19, with communication from the DLG Chair, the Department of Communities' Regional Executive Director, providing information to the membership on remote community pandemic plan development, key messages being delivered to community members, and statistics on testing, confirmed cases and people supported with accommodation to isolate.

Following the initial response to the pandemic, a Combined Kimberley DLG was reconvened on 25 June 2020 whereby the membership was provided with information and updates from senior officials in each agency on their progress responding to COVID-19, the position of the Kimberley Region in the recovery process and focus on desired outcomes of further recovery activities. This meeting included an opportunity to engage with the State Recovery Coordinator [Sharyn O'Neill] and the State Welfare Coordinator [Michelle Andrews], as well as WACHS CEO [Jeff Moffett].

Two subsequent combined DLG meetings were convened via MS teams [in line with the regular schedule of meetings]. Separate East Kimberley and West Kimberley DLG meetings have resumed this month.

Given the sustained membership of the Kimberley DLG, the characterisation of 'sensational' co-operation during the COVID-19 pandemic is potentially an overstatement; the Kimberley DLGs have been typified by an empowering and collegial environment. Similarly, interagency co-operation by agencies outside the DLG forum is especially strong in the Kimberley, given the unique service delivery requirements and subsequent advantages which are able to be realised by ongoing collaboration and integrated processes. Responding in a collaborative way to COVID amplified collegial relationships and enhanced the partnerships particularly between DLG members and the ACCO sector [through engagement with the Aboriginal task force which was developed by key ACCO's and chaired by Tyrone Garstone KLC Deputy CEO]. The enhanced collegial working relationships continue within the region.

The DLG met in the West Kimberley last week and is scheduled to meet in the East Kimberley this week [first meetings for 2021]

The membership of each DLG is provided below:



The membership of each DLG is provided below:

	Organisation Name
<b>Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)</b>	Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council [KAMSC]
	Aarnja
	Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service [BRAMS]
	Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre
	Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation
	Derby Aboriginal Health Service (DAHS)
	Nirrumbuk Environmental Health & Services
	Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services
	Garnduwa Amboorny Wiran Aboriginal Corporation
	Men's Outreach Service Aboriginal Corporation
<b>State Government</b>	Anglicare WA
	Save The Children
	PCYC
	CHMR Cyrenian House
<b>Community Sector Organisations</b>	Department of Communities
	WACHS
	Department of Justice
	WAPOL
	Department of Education
	Department of Local Government, Sports & Cultural Industries
	North Regional TAFE
	Kimberley Development Commission
<b>Commonwealth Government</b>	National Indigenous Australians Agency
	National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
	Department of Social Services (DSS)
	Australian Government Department of Human Services
<b>Local Government</b>	Shire of Broome
	Shire of Derby West Kimberley

## EAST KIMBERLEY DLG MEMBERS as at September 2020

	Organisation Name
<b>Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)</b>	Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council (KAMSC)
	Binarri-binyja yarrowoo (BBY)
	Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC)
	Wunan Foundation (Wunan)
	Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang (MG Corp)
	Gawooleng Yawoodeng Aboriginal Corporation (GY)
<b>Community Sector Organisations</b>	Kimberley Community Legal Services (KCLS)
	Save The Children
	Catholic Education WA
<b>State Government</b>	Department of Communities (DoC)
	WA Country Health Service (WACHS)
	Department of Education
	Department of Justice
	Youth Justice
	WA Police (WAPOL)
	Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSCI)
	Kimberley Development Commission (KDC)
<b>Commonwealth Government</b>	Australian Government Department of Human Services
	Department of Social Services (DSS)
	National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
<b>Local Government</b>	Shire of Halls Creek (SoHC)
	Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley (SWEK)



## Appendix 8: Department of Communities Email to remote communities

From: COVID-19 Remote Communities Mailbox <Covid19rcr@communities.wa.gov.au>  
Sent: Monday, 23 March 2020 5:17 PM  
To: COVID-19 Remote Communities Mailbox <Covid19rcr@communities.wa.gov.au>  
Subject: COVID-19 Update

Good afternoon,

### Local Pandemic Action Plan

A local pandemic plan to protect your community from COVID-19 is critical. The COVID-19 Remote Community Response Team is working with remote Aboriginal communities to develop local pandemic action plans, based on the Western Australian Government Pandemic Plan. The plans will help bring together the resources, contacts and information you need to respond to COVID-19 and keep your community safe. It is not known if and when a COVID-19 infection may occur in a remote Aboriginal community, so this planning needs to be done quickly. We are here to support and assist you prepare your community plan and we will continue to work with you to respond to the pandemic.

- If your community already has a pandemic plan in place, we ask that you forward the plan to us as soon as possible. We will review the plan with you to ensure you have the support you need to respond to COVID-19.
- If you do not have a pandemic plan in place, we request that you use the attached template. Our team will get in touch with you from tomorrow morning to help you develop the plan. Please let us know if you have a preferred email or phone number that we can use to contact you to discuss your plan.

### Biosecurity Act measures

On 20 March 2020, the National Cabinet provided in-principle agreement to the Commonwealth Minister for Health to take action under the Biosecurity Act to restrict travel into remote Aboriginal communities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The COVID-19 Remote Communities Response Team is working with relevant stakeholders and community leaders to develop an implementation plan for the measures announced under the Biosecurity Act. This will include clarifying how the Commonwealth measures impact on the State Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions. We will be in touch with you again as soon as we have more information.

### Support for return to community

Right now, your people are safest in their home community, not in town. Therefore, the State Government is supporting community members to return to their community. We want to ensure that community members who are currently in other towns or regions can return home. There will be no cost to residents for this travel and they will be supported to obtain food and supplies for their return. The Aboriginal Community Connectors Program will be helping to do this, and ensuring that anyone showing signs of illness will be linked to relevant health services.

### Contact

You can reach us at [Covid19rcr@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:Covid19rcr@communities.wa.gov.au)

For more information about COVID-19, please contact the COVID-19 Information Hotline on 1800 020 080 or visit [www.wa.gov.au/covid19](http://www.wa.gov.au/covid19)

Daily updates about COVID-19 are available on the Premier's Facebook page: <https://m.facebook.com/MarkMcGowanMP/>

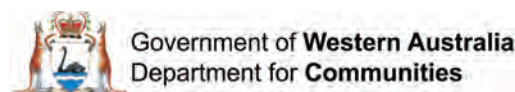
We encourage you to share this email with anyone who might need it.

Kind regards,

[Redacted signature]

Director | Remote Communities  
Strategy and Transformation  
Department of Communities | 189 Royal Street, East Perth

[Redacted signature]



*The Department of Communities acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Western Australia and their ongoing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to their cultures, to their elders past and present, as well as their future and emerging leaders.*

## Appendix 9: Department of Communities Return to Community program

Community	Number Returned
Bidyadanga	19
Bow River	12
Broome	23
Cockatoo Springs	22
Derby	24
Djugerari	23
Dodnun	11
Fitzroy Crossing	32
Flying Fox	19
Halls Creek	61
Kalumburu	61
Kununurra	12
Kupungarri	53
Looma	49
Mandangala	15
Molly Springs	13
Ngalingkadji	22
Ningbingi	51
Pandanus Park	17
Ringer Soak	21
Wangkatjungka	19
Wirrimanu	22
Yakanarra	12
Yirralalem	33
Yulumbu	29
Yungngora	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>721</b>



Appendix 10: Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No.3)

# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACT 2005 (WA)

## Section 67 and 72A

### REMOTE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES DIRECTIONS (NO. 3)

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

On 15 March 2020, the Minister for Emergency Services declared a state of emergency with effect from 12 a.m. on 16 March 2020 in respect of the pandemic caused by COVID-19 pursuant to section 56 of the *Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA)* (Act). The state of emergency continues in effect. The state of emergency applies to the State of Western Australia.

I, Christopher John Dawson, Commissioner of Police and State Emergency Coordinator, now give these directions pursuant to my powers under section 67 and 72A of the Act.

#### PREAMBLE

1. The purpose of these directions is to:
  - (a) limit the spread of COVID-19 to protect vulnerable Aboriginal people in Remote Aboriginal Communities; and
  - (b) facilitate the movement of persons into and out of a **Remote Aboriginal Community** in certain specified circumstances whilst still limiting the spread of COVID-19.

*Note: these directions apply to each Remote Aboriginal Community included in Schedule 1. The State Emergency Coordinator may agree to vary Schedule 1 so that these directions do not apply to a particular community or to a particular part of the community, where he considers it appropriate to do so having regard to the purpose of these directions. A person who wishes to have Schedule 1 varied in that way may make a request to the State Emergency Coordinator for that to occur.*

#### CITATION

2. These directions may be referred to as the **Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions No. 3**.

#### COMMENCEMENT

3. These directions come into effect at 11.59pm on 4 June 2020.

## REVOCATION

4. The Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions No. 2 I made on 20 March 2020 are revoked.

## DIRECTIONS

5. A person may only enter onto the land or waters within a Remote Aboriginal Community if:
  - (a) all of the following apply to the person entering the area:
    - (i) immediately before the entry the person does not have any **symptoms** except where the person:
      - (A) is a resident of the particular community which they propose to enter;
      - (B) left the community within the last 24 hours and now seeks to return;
      - (C) had the symptoms prior to leaving the community; and
      - (D) has not been in contact with a person who has received a **positive result** during the period they have been away from the community;
    - (ii) the person has not received **oral or written notice** that he or she is a **close contact**;
    - (iii) the person is not awaiting a **test result**;
    - (iv) the person has not received a **positive result**, or has received a positive result but has also received a certificate from a **responsible officer** certifying that he or she has recovered from COVID-19 within the meaning of the COVID-19 Series of National Guidelines in force from time to time;
    - (v) in the 14 days immediately before the entry, the person has not been exposed to COVID-19 without adequate personal protective precautions;
    - (vi) in the 14 days immediately before the entry, the person has not been in a foreign country;
    - (vii) the person's entry onto the land is not prohibited by any other written law; and

- (b) at least one of sub-paragraphs (i) – (viii) applies to the person entering the area:
- (i) the person enters on the land or waters of the Remote Aboriginal Community they normally reside or work in; or
  - (ii) the person enters for family or cultural purposes and remains only for so long as is required for that purpose; or
  - (iii) the person is:
    - (A) a resident of, or a person who provides **essential, community or human services or supplies** to, a Remote Aboriginal Community; and
    - (B) enters for the purposes of accessing **core services**; and
    - (C) remains only for so long as is required for those purposes; or
  - (iv) the person enters for the purposes of providing essential, community or human services or supplies and remains only for so long as is required for those purposes; or
  - (v) the person enters in an emergency (not including the state of emergency or any other state of emergency) and remains only for so long as the emergency continues; or
  - (vi) the person enters the area solely for the purposes of undertaking a journey to a place beyond the area and:
    - (A) the person takes the most direct route through the area;
    - (B) the journey does not involve the person coming into contact with any other person in the area other than a person who was an occupant of the vehicle at the time it entered the area; and
    - (C) the person remains only for so long as is required for the purpose of transiting through the area; or
  - (vii) the person is authorised by law to enter and remain on the land or waters or is acting in pursuance of a power or duty imposed by law; or
  - (viii) in any other circumstances approved in writing by me or an officer authorised by me as State Emergency Coordinator for the purpose and subject to any conditions expressed in that approval.

*Note: a person who fits within paragraph (a) may also be subject to other directions including the Quarantine and Isolation (Undiagnosed) Directions and the Isolation (Diagnosed) Directions and must continue to comply with those directions.*

6. Any person who:
- (a) enters a Remote Aboriginal Community in accordance with paragraph 5; and
  - (b) is not a resident of the particular community which they have entered,
- must take all reasonable steps (having regard to the person's circumstances and reason for entering the community) to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID 19 to another person.

## **DEFINITIONS**

7. **Close contact** has the same meaning as in the Quarantine and Isolation (Undiagnosed) Directions.
8. **Community layout plan** means a layout plan endorsed by the Western Australian Planning Commission under State Planning Policy 3.2.
9. **Core services** means:
- (a) necessary medical care or supplies that are not reasonably available outside of the particular community;
  - (b) health, public health, health promotion and health care programmes and initiatives, including:
    - (i) health screening programmes such as Trachoma screening, Ear Bus and Lions Eye institute;
    - (ii) health assessment programmes such as Aged Care Assessment Team and Community Aids and Equipment Program;
    - (iii) allied health programmes;
    - (iv) immunisation programmes;
    - (v) syphilis management programmes;
    - (vi) well-women's programmes; and
    - (vii) environmental health programmes.

- (c) goods or services, including food, water and other necessities of life that are not reasonably available to that person outside of the particular community, provided that the goods and services are not available to the person at a location closer to the place of residence or the **workplace** of the person.
- (d) school education related services that are not reasonably available outside of the particular community;
- (e) policing, corrections, court and tribunal and justice related services; and
- (f) any other service designated in writing by me or an officer authorised by me for that purpose to be a core service.

10. **Essential, community or human services and supplies** includes but is not limited to:

- (a) core services;
- (b) health care, including the provision of medical care and supplies;
- (c) services relating to prevention of or recovery from domestic violence;
- (d) services relating to child protection;
- (e) services of a kind typically provided by a local government, including waste and refuse services;
- (f) services, benefits, programs or facilities provided by the Chief Executive Officer of Centrelink or his or her delegate;
- (g) funeral services;
- (h) government infrastructure projects, roadworks and road maintenance activities;
- (i) the operation, maintenance, repair or replacement of:
  - (i) equipment for providing electricity, gas, water, medical services, telecommunication services or broadcasting services; or
  - (ii) other essential infrastructure in the area;
- (j) delivery of food, fuel, mail or medical supplies;
- (k) continued construction in the area of housing or transport infrastructure and government infrastructure projects that were in progress immediately prior to the commencement of these directions;

- (l) the carrying out of mining operations or operations ancillary to mining operations, including production and exploration, in the area in a manner that minimises the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to other persons;
  - (m) transporting freight to or from a place in the particular community;
  - (n) carrying out commercial primary production in the area in a manner that minimises the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to other persons; and
  - (o) any other service designated in writing to be an essential or human service or supplies by me or an officer authorised by me for that purpose
11. **Oral or written notice** has the same meaning as in the Isolation (Diagnosed) Directions.
12. **Positive result** has the same meaning as in the Isolation (Diagnosed) Directions.
13. **Remote Aboriginal Community** means each of the communities set out in Schedule 1 as varied by me in writing from time to time and whose spatial extent is defined by reference to:
- (a) a **community layout plan**; or
  - (b) where no such plan exists, anything, including any road or building that falls within the footprint of the community;
14. **Responsible Officer** has the same meaning as in the Isolation (Diagnosed) Directions.
15. **Symptoms** means:
- (a) a fever of 38 degrees or above;
  - (b) a recent history of fever; or
  - (c) symptoms of an acute respiratory infection (including but without limitation, shortness of breath, a cough or sore throat)
16. **Test result** has the same meaning as in the Quarantine and Isolation (Undiagnosed) Directions.
17. **Workplace** means a person's usual place of work.

**PENALTIES**

It is an offence to fail to comply with any of these directions, punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for bodies corporate.



.....  
**Christopher John Dawson**  
State Emergency Coordinator and Commissioner of Police

4 June 2020

2230 hours

Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions #3  
(DATE MODIFIED: 5 AUGUST 2020)

**SCHEDULE 1**

Community	Alternative Name(s)	X Coord	Y Coord	Layout Plan	Clarifications & Modifications
Alligator Hole		128.8784082	-16.02969449	No	
Ardyaloon	Bardi, One Arm Point	123.0608112	-16.44573962	Yes	
Balginjurr	Balginjirr, Lower Liveringa	123.7870825	-17.90475987	No	
Barrel Well	Ajana	114.603357	-27.96464299	Yes	
Baulu Wah	Baulu-Wah, Violet Valley	128.0128588	-17.22006812	No	<a href="#">EXCLUDING the Violet Valley Campground, as shown on map attached to variation instrument.</a>
Bawoorrooga		126.1179026	-18.75651897	No	
Bayulu	Go Go	125.5976212	-18.30083487	Yes	
Beagle Bay		122.664962	-16.98415912	Yes	
Bell Springs		128.7913056	-15.88509449	Yes	
Bells Point	Weedong	122.6942417	-16.77865174	No	
Bidan	Bedunburru, Nillibubbica, Nillibubbuca	123.1682212	-17.64477637	Yes	
Bidijul		125.1263361	-18.60992587	No	
Bidyadanga	La Grange	121.776685	-18.68480162	Yes	
Biljing Bilging Bingar	Biljing Biljing Bingarr, Red Creek	128.9121742	-15.86487712	No	
Billanooka	Billinooka	120.8902856	-23.03736062	No	
Billard		122.6732579	-16.97203211	No	
Bindoola	Darwalah	127.8132194	-15.67720224	No	
Bindurk		122.5421547	-16.95724429	No	
Biridu		125.6227086	-17.88782574	No	
Birndirri	Old Lamboo	127.337305	-18.5315	No	
Blackstone	Papulankutja	128.2838797	-25.99831987	Yes	
Bobieding	Bernards Well	122.6346651	-16.97479925	No	
Bow River	Juwurlinji, Juwulinypuny	128.1862092	-16.87040875	Yes	
Brubrunjanjal	Brunbrunganjal, Kitty Wells, Brubrunajal	121.640073	-18.86693725	No	
Budgarjook	Red Soil	122.5210176	-17.01770349	No	
Budjilbidi		127.4298195	-19.22929844	No	
Bulgin		122.9994764	-16.39747337	No	
Bulinjarr	Bulanjarr, Mowla Bluff, Balunjarr	123.6134667	-18.58958333	No	
Buningbarr	Barringbarr	123.0135224	-16.38978935	No	
Buniol		122.98	-16.87	No	
Burrjuk	Banana Wells	122.5889245	-16.97647109	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 4 August 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Burringurrah	Mount Augustus, Mount James	116.932686	-24.651178	Yes	
Buttah Windee	Gidgee Gully	118.447698	-26.606858	Yes	
Bygnunn		122.996773	-16.5241905	No	
Camp 61	Ngalkanginya	121.0764421	-22.90956062	No	
Carnot Springs		122.3176566	-17.17236499	No	
Garranya	-	127.7692556	-19.23120437	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 20 July 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Carson River		126.7681567	-14.48882036	No	

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Community	Alternative Name(s)	X Coord	Y Coord	Layout Plan	Clarifications & Modifications
Cattle Creek	Brook Creek, Yinigin Jaru, Ngiling Anjru	128.8112361	-17.65470837	No	
Chile Creek	Jilirr	122.8736127	-16.53232912	No	
Chirritta Station	Weymul, Chirritta Station	116.804939	-21.012861	No	
Cockatoo		122.7014397	-16.89729912	No	
Cockatoo Springs	Ngunulum	128.9520725	-15.94670687	No	
Coonana	Upurl Upurlila Ngurratja	123.2200985	-31.060278	No	
Cosmo Newberry	Cosmo, Yilka	122.8961717	-27.99537575	Yes	
Crocodile Hole	Rugan	128.1408477	-16.64209662	No	
Darlu Darlu	DarluDarlu, Nine Mile	128.8592599	-16.99877724	No	
Desert Gold	Desert Farm	120.340002	-26.560624	No	
Dillon Springs		128.3508139	-15.92508337	No	
Djaradjung	Djarajung	122.9671936	-16.56112611	No	
Djarindjin	Djarinjin	122.8955209	-16.51356187	Yes	<a href="#">EXCLUDING the following lots on Djarindjin Community Layout Plan: 504 to 548, 551 to 552. (Click for link)</a>
Djibbinj		122.3169964	-17.05700724	No	
Djilimbardi	Djillumbardi, Waratea, Djilumbardi	124.8750734	-19.05823184	No	
Djoodood		122.7998069	-16.66954374	No	
Djugarargyn		122.8686724	-16.7972245	No	
Djugerari	Cherrabun	125.5103957	-18.98870624	Yes	
Djulburr	Djulbard	122.8103305	-16.561059	No	
Dodnun	Wah Dodnun, Mount Elizabeth	126.212043	-16.43923524	Yes	
Doon Doon	Woolah	128.2464996	-16.30642512	Yes	<a href="#">EXCLUDING the following areas: the Doon Doon (Woolah) Caravan Park and the Doon Doon (Woolah) Roadhouse, marked 72 and 53 respectively on the Woolah Layout Plan. (Click for link)</a>
Embulgun	-	<del>122.6275094</del>	<del>-16.80054724</del>	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 4 August 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Emu Creek	Gulgagulganeng	128.7906417	-15.81413886	Yes	
Five Mile	Five Mile (WA), Irrungadji Outstation	120.190905	-21.9075735	No	
Flying Foxhole	Flying Fox, Worrworm	128.6056944	-15.8333695	No	
Flywell	Barangga	127.6054855	-18.29937512	No	
Four Mile	Johnson's Block	128.9406769	-15.89733049	No	
Frazier Downs	Frazier	121.7112982	-18.79815874	No	
Galamanda	Galamunda	125.4003215	-17.75818961	No	
Galburring	Gulberang, Eight Mile Bore, Djuluwon, Galburring	128.9316834	-15.89291387	Yes	
Galeru Gorge	Mount Pierre, Looma Galeru Gorge	126.0749215	-18.60776975	No	
Ganinyi	Louisa Downs	126.7148084	-18.71102136	No	
Geboowama	Rocky Springs, Morning Glory	128.7679556	-15.92621949	No	

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Community	Alternative Name(s)	X Coord	Y Coord	Layout Plan	Clarifications & Modifications
Gilaroong	Gillarong	125.6002666	-18.29464425	No	
Gillysharp	Gilly Sharpe	125.9728035	-18.74934672	No	
Gilungarra	Gillingura, Lulu's Block	127.5502762	-19.98023812	No	
Girriyoowa	Pullout Springs	126.767675	-18.721125	No	
Gnylmarung	-	122.5508664	-16.86039212	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 24 July 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Goobiny		122.5438776	-16.85829236	No	
Goodarl	Fork Creek	128.2239454	-15.60010253	No	
Googar- Goonyool	-	122.6407975	-16.77551127	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 4 August 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Goolarabooloo	Goolarabooloo Millibinyarri, Coconut Wells, Goolarabarloo	122.2176627	-17.83709124	Yes	
Goolarrgon	Goolarrdgoon	122.9525217	-16.40939074	No	
Goolgaradah	Goolgadah	126.7501639	-18.72199724	No	
Goolomonon	Gulumonon	122.9041911	-16.46064124	No	
Goombading	Tappers Inlet	123.0229	-16.420704	No	
Goembaragin	-	122.663348	-16.79625899	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 24 July 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Goonj Arlan	Goonjarlan	123.0312846	-16.67056636	No	
Goose Hill	Gullaluwa, Gilaluwa	128.3282492	-15.57171824	No	
Gubili		123.14	-16.87	No	
Guda Guda	Nine Mile Camp	128.1922962	-15.53364749	No	
Gudargie	Wattagutabe	126.7494549	-17.76164124	No	
Gudrum		122.96	-16.49	No	
Gudumal	Gudumul, Cunningham Point	123.1343016	-16.70637124	No	
Gullaweed		123.0226857	-16.39789737	No	
Gumbarnun	-	123.0324546	-16.42279749	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 24 July 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Gunburr		122.25	-17.12	No	
Gurrbalgun	Pender Bay, Gurrbalgun Urrma	122.7871474	-16.73207599	No	
Honeymoon Beach		126.6801039	-14.10425112	No	
Ikulka		127.5420768	-28.35479744	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 6 August 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>

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Community	Alternative Name(s)	X Coord	Y Coord	Layout Plan	Clarifications & Modifications
Imintji	Immintji, Mount House, Saddlers Springs	125.4614251	-17.15052111	Yes	<a href="#">EXCLUDING the following lots on Imintji Community Layout Plan: 38, 41, 42, 44, 100, 101. (Click for link)</a>
Innawonga	Bellary Springs, Belleary Springs	117.8894216	-23.04565487	No	
Jabir Jabir		122.3717056	-17.19267587	No	
Jameson	Mantamaru , Parnanaru	127.6651379	-25.86251426	No	
Janterriji	Koomie, Dolly Hole	127.6040397	-17.34170887	No	
Jarlmadangah	Jarlmadangah Burru, Mount Anderson, Jarlmadanga	124.0114956	-18.01424449	Yes	
Jarlmadanka	Ngyginah, Ngyginah Cattle Community	123.9290118	-18.03488492	No	
Jaylirr	Bishop's Dell, Mount Dockeril, Jalyirr	127.1676988	-20.65639797	No	
Jigalong		120.7814877	-23.35979775	Yes	
Jilariya		127.3300234	-18.53028156	No	
Jimbalkudunj	Jimbalkudung, Paradise Station, Jimalakadunj	124.6447099	-17.89241675	Yes	
Jimbilum	Pack Saddle	128.7010881	-15.8729841	Yes	
Jinparinya		118.827845	-20.372818	No	
Jinyaadi	Jinyardi	123.2778986	-17.04710563	No	
Joy Springs	Eight Mile	125.6920329	-18.33239437	Yes	
Julgunn		122.9836077	-16.61266475	No	
Jundaru	Jandaru, Peedamulla	115.626866	-21.8442	No	
Kadjina	Millijiddee, Wulungarra	124.941733	-18.82525949	Yes	
Kalumburu	Kulumburu	126.642079	-14.29491762	Yes	
Kalungkurriji	Norton Bore	128.061519	-17.20125	No	
Kalaydayan	Kalayadayan	121.8945387	-18.75393874	No	
Kandiwal	Mitchell Plateau, Ungolan	125.8419712	-14.82066649	Yes	
Kanpa	Gumpa, Pira-Kata	125.61	-26.52	Yes	
Karalundi	Karalindi	118.6837596	-26.12760038	Yes	<a href="#">EXCLUDING the following lots on Karalundi Community Layout Plan: 23,24 and 29. (Click for link)</a>
Kardaloo	Wandanooka, Kardaloo, Kardaloo Farm	115.6099194	-28.38470838	No	
Karnparri	Melon Hole, Karnparri, Three Mile, Karnparri	125.6173705	-18.31407225	Yes	
Karrku		127.9316669	-24.70805593	No	
Kartang Rija	Kartang Riga, Turner River, Kartung Rija	128.3620376	-17.90521887	No	
Kawarre	Purnululu, Bungle Bungle	128.3418744	-17.33999112	No	
Kayirriwarney	Kayirriwarra	128.452229	-17.284167	No	
Kearney Range	Walajunti Block, Bawoorroonga	128.074776	-20.17185988	No	
Killi Killi	Lukarara, Kirli Kirli	128.5987306	-20.27258337	No	
Kiwirrkurra		127.7647151	-22.81542974	Yes	
Koorabye	Ngalapita , Kalyeeda, Koorabay	124.7541806	-18.58425274	Yes	
Kumbrarumba	Cumburumba, Gurrbumi	128.9824406	-15.68691825	No	
Kunawarritji	Kunawarritji, Well 33	124.7257197	-22.3284345	Yes	

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Community	Alternative Name(s)	X Coord	Y Coord	Layout Plan	Clarifications & Modifications
Kupartiya	Bohemia Downs , Bohemia Downs Station	126.2430047	-18.89303088	Yes	
Kupungarri	Mount Barnett , Kupingarra	125.9302468	-16.71994389	No	
Kurinyjarn	Kurinjayan, Kurinyjayan	126.7806442	-18.7137353	No	
Kurku		125.456769	-19.47992963	No	
Kurrawang		121.3304669	-30.83044526	No	
Kutkububba	Kutkabubba, Kutabubba	120.234063	-26.33000276	No	
La Djardarr	Ladjardarr Bay, La Djardarr Bay (Disaster Bay)	123.1495921	-16.88262399	No	
Lamboogunian	Koongie Park	127.5361557	-18.33907887	Yes	
Lamboog Station	Birndirdie, Ngunjwirri	127.3503431	-18.46292337	No	
Larinyuwar	Cone Bay	123.6618697	-16.48526674	No	
Linga		127.8949857	-18.40573262	No	
Lombadina	-	<del>122.8929629</del>	<del>-16.51608762</del>	Yes	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 4 August 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Looma		124.1495415	-18.03923387	Yes	
Loongabid	Nyul Nyul	122.5448872	-16.97342774	No	
Loumard		122.8374957	-16.57388237	No	
Luluigui		124.03	-18.15	No	
Lumukul	Osmond Valley	128.2582252	-17.23605399	No	
Maddarr		123.1574192	-16.81912112	No	
Majaddin	Madjurrin	125.6674157	-16.04784675	No	
Malaburru		123.2375702	-17.08590225	No	
Malangan	Illengirri	128.8742832	-17.38936112	No	
Mandangala	Glen Hill	128.3577679	-16.54378175	Yes	
Marta Marta	Deca Station	118.982753	-20.353956	No	
Marunbabidi	Prap Prap, Maranbanpidi	126.1441858	-15.39814705	No	
McGowans Island	McGowan Island	126.6492052	-14.14572774	No	
Mercedes Cove	-	<del>122.5921425</del>	<del>-16.76566087</del>	No	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 24 July 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Mia Maya	Mayi Mia, Pender Gardens	122.8531237	-16.72853449	No	
Middle Lagoon	Wulgurding	122.5762654	-16.77371449	No	
Midlagoon	Milargoos, Midlagoon, Millargoos	122.583152	-16.77827074	No	
Milba		127.7556951	-18.17809474	No	
Mimbi		126.0581287	-18.72639013	No	<a href="#">EXCLUDING the Visitor Access Road and Visitor Reception Building, as shown on map attached to variation instrument. (Click for link)</a>
Mindibungu	Bililuna, Billiluna	127.6617647	-19.55539637	Yes	
Mingalkala	Mingalkala	126.1615472	-18.69446112	Yes	
Mingullatharndo	Five Mile, Roebourne, 5 Mile	117.2130532	-20.80438425	Yes	

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Community	Alternative Name(s)	X Coord	Y Coord	Layout Plan	Clarifications & Modifications
Miniata	Old Red Creek, Red Creek 2	128.9247062	-15.85730037	No	
Molly Springs	Wigilawarrim, Wijilawarrim	128.4683222	-15.82146668	No	
Monbon		122.3311127	-17.05842175	No	
Moongardie		126.4480589	-18.78049124	Yes	
Morard	Moord	122.3781292	-17.059695	No	
Mount Margaret	AMOS	122.1846605	-28.79506601	Yes	
Mowanjum		123.7012084	-17.35549424	Yes	<a href="#">EXCLUDING the Mowanjum Aboriginal Art and Cultural Centre (Lot 93 on the Mowanjum Community Layout Plan). (Click for link)</a>
Mudjarri	Mudjarri Aboriginal Corporation	122.2919497	-17.07460399	No	
Mudnunn	Gulan, Gullun	122.9832121	-16.52765587	No	
Mulan	Lake Gregory	127.5950881	-20.10118237	Yes	
Mulga Queen	Nurra Kurramunoo	122.0409222	-27.55674825	Yes	
Muludja	Colin Yard	125.7616366	-18.15971187	Yes	
Mundud		122.2856256	-17.08205581	No	
Munget		122.6222754	-16.7991302	No	
Munjari		127.1762841	-18.39473865	No	
Munmarul	Milla Windi, Millie Windie	125.7506667	-17.45576667	No	
Munthanmar	Munthamar	128.7738354	-15.88358375	Yes	
Murphy Creek		122.5697767	-16.9219845	No	
Neem		122.5805375	-16.79016011	No	
Neildu		127.7290765	-15.23936824	No	
Ngadarlargin		122.417696	-16.99486862	No	
Ngalingkadji	Chestnut Bore , Ngalingadi	125.7081592	-18.65792212	Yes	
Ngallagunda	Ngallangunda, Gibb River	126.4325227	-16.42689199	Yes	
Ngamakoon		122.916999	-16.44704374	No	
Ngarantjardu	Mount Bannerman	126.2213169	-19.38526236	No	
Ngarlan Burr	Yallet	122.5696936	-16.9078425	No	
Ngulupi		128.8996764	-20.52636624	No	
Ngulwirriwirri	Ngully, Four Mile Creek 2, Brown's Block, Nulliwirri	128.9320605	-15.90172524	No	
Ngumpan	Pinnacle Creek , Pinnacles	126.0358326	-18.76916075	Yes	
Ngurawaana	Millstream	116.984306	-21.411839	No	
Ngurtuwarta	Alligator Hill	125.5196797	-18.27826312	Yes	
Nilargoan	Sunday Island	123.1785655	-16.42860949	No	
Nillygan		122.5524959	-16.88039171	No	
Nimbing		128.6785839	-15.24025049	No	
Norman Creek		122.5304013	-16.95117931	No	
Nudugun		122.3353277	-17.16217499	No	
Nulla Nulla		127.7888682	-15.54777587	No	
Nunju Yallet		122.5573156	-16.88924194	No	
Nyah Nygah	Nygah Nygah	121.921215	-18.50574362	No	
Nyallawilli	Ngyallawilli, Ngyala Willi, Mullawilli Hill	127.7294976	-18.42950111	No	
Nyilil		122.9889767	-16.60951512	No	
Nyumwah		122.9824802	-16.55720549	No	
Pago		126.7188664	-14.12452637	No	

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Community	Alternative Name(s)	X Coord	Y Coord	Layout Plan	Clarifications & Modifications
Pandanus Park	Tjarramba , Yurmulan Aboriginal Community	123.659164	-17.73697174	Yes	
Pantijan	Panta Downs	125.054395	-15.96141275	No	
Parnngurr	Cotton Creek, Punnngurr	122.5975457	-22.81755188	Yes	
Patch Up		127.567638	-18.30705	No	
Patjarr	Karilywarra , Karliwarra	126.3126947	-24.61566975	Yes	
Pia Wadjari	Pia Wadjari, Mt Barloweerie, Diandi Darlot, Murgoo	116.3920101	-27.12235275	Yes	
Punju Njamal	Punju Ngarugundi Njamal, Ngarla Coastal Ngamal	118.830734	-20.364748	No	
Punmu	Lake Dora	123.1206547	-22.04400462	Yes	
Puntawari		121.6044779	-23.59593307	No	
Quartz Blow	Quartz Blow Hole, Fletcher Family	127.8023411	-18.10660386	No	
Radjarli	Rarrdjali	122.6314552	-17.8259547	No	
Rb River Junction	Rb Junction, Rb, Robe River Junction	128.8943947	-17.04465187	No	
Red Shells		122.626074	-16.80047098	No	
Ribinyung Dawang	Rowena Downs, Mud Springs	128.7712944	-15.87982225	Yes	
Ringer Soak	Kundat Djaru, Yuraman	128.6158472	-18.79404724	Yes	
Robertson Range		120.8098169	-23.455626	No	
Rocky Springs		126.6991244	-18.77014987	No	
Rolah	Rollah	121.702618	-18.731047	No	
Strelley		119.0554606	-20.46716825	No	
Tappers Inlet		122.5570522	-16.81100687	No	
Tirralintji	Mornington, Terralintji	126.4355248	-17.19575022	Yes	
Tjirrkarli		125.4724387	-26.00029825	No	
Tjukurla		128.7194001	-24.34772312	Yes	
Tjuntjuntjara	Paupiyala Tjarutja, Tjuntjunjarra	127.0977076	-29.34070426	Yes	
Wakathuni		117.8317348	-22.86613036	Yes	
Walgun		120.7189499	-23.2019085	Yes	
Wanamulnyndong	Mijilmil Mia, Wanamulyadong	121.8879504	-18.7450915	No	
Wangkatjungka	Christmas Creek, Wangkajungka	125.9268694	-18.88522224	Yes	
Wannarn	Wannarn, Wannan	127.5417699	-25.28282213	Yes	
Warakurna	Giles	128.2877723	-25.00118842	Yes	
Warburton		126.5778539	-26.13361187	Yes	
Warmun	Turkey Creek	128.2121337	-17.02990105	Yes	
Warralong	Karntimarta	119.591761	-20.649954	Yes	
White Gum Park		122.60476	-17.03536681	No	
White Rock	Ngunjiwirra, Ngunjuwirri	127.4122664	-18.49054316	No	
Windidda		122.2129406	-26.38854775	No	
Windjingayr	Windjingayre, Windjingare	124.6194679	-17.17181062	No	
Windong		128.9336439	-15.87174405	No	
Wingellina	Irrunuytju, Irrunytju	128.9308319	-26.0677965	Yes	
Wirrimanu	Balgo, Balgo Hills	127.9830312	-20.1425135	Yes	
Woodstock	Mumbaltjari	118.934775	-21.534389	No	
Woolergerberle ng	Wollgergerberleng, Hollow Springs, Woolie	128.8533246	-15.86419161	Yes	

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Worribah	Warrimbah	125.0762509	-18.41291274	No	
Wuggubun	Card Creek, Wuggun	<del>128.3793409</del>	<del>-15.95512111</del>	<del>No</del>	<a href="#">This community was wholly excluded from the operation of Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions (No 3) on 19 July 2020. (Click for link to variation instrument)</a>
Wulununjur		123.2764822	-17.08582524	No	
Wungu	Old Flora Valley Station	127.9983453	-18.32540787	No	
Wurreranginy	Frog Hollow, Wurrenanginy	128.0505897	-17.2753345	No	
Yakanarra	Yakanara	125.2988232	-18.67164387	Yes	
Yandarrina	Yandarina, Grey's Block	121.604746	-19.04214899	No	
Yandeyarra	Mugarinya	118.4031475	-21.28518751	Yes	
Yardangarli	Yardangarli, Dingo Springs	128.9305126	-16.01000575	No	
Yardoogarra	Garimba	121.920747	-18.46154287	No	
Yarramurral	Walgall	127.6077779	-21.14000006	No	
Yarri Yarri		124.4808182	-18.88133924	No	
Yarrunga	Chinaman Garden , Alice Downs	127.8953813	-17.8676939	Yes	
Yawuru		122.3000224	-17.93282862	No	
Yiramalay	Yiramalay, Wamali Bunuba	125.3670646	-17.74639274	No	
Yirralalem	Yirralallan, Packsaddle Springs	128.6913396	-15.88817086	No	
Yiyili	Louisa Downs Station , Louisa Downs	126.7542111	-18.71886662	No	
Youngaleena	Youngaleena Bunjima, Bunjima	118.525908	-22.298094	No	
Yulga Jinna	Fraser Well	118.5577279	-25.6173055	Yes	
Yulumbu	Yulumbu, Tableland's Station	126.9010619	-17.27829486	No	
Yungngora	Noonkanbah, Nookanbah	124.8311109	-18.50322206	Yes	



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## Interview List

Ref	Name	Position held	Date interviewed
1	Tyronne Garstone	Chair, COVID Aboriginal Taskforce	22 Oct 2020
2	Samantha Betts	Binarri-binyja Yarrowoo, Kununurra	22 Oct 2020
3	Greg Crofts	Superintendent of the Kimberley, WA Police, Broome	
	Dave Whitnell	Inspector, WA Police, Broome	27 Oct 2020
4	Fiona Fischer	Regional Director, Kimberley WA Department of Communities, Broome	26 October 2020
5	Dickie Bedford Mel Bedfor Kerry Morris Jo Coleman	CEO and staff – Marra Warra Worra, Fitzroy Crossing	2 October 2020
		CDP Manager, Fitzroy Crossing	
6	Maureen Carter	CEO – Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, Fitzroy Crossing	2 October 2020
7	Rohan Worsdell	Aboriginal Policy Coordination Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet, WA.	27 October 2020
8	Lexie Truncollino	Halls Creek	19 November 2020 3 December 2020
9	Giancarlo Mazella	Community Development Officer, Boab Health, Kununurra	15 November 2020
10	Des Hill Beth Rutter	CEO, Kununurra Warringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC) Coordinator, KWAC	27 January 2021
11	Christie Hawker	CEO, Binarri-Binyja Yarrowoo	22 December 2020 24 February 2021
12	Hugh Lovesy	CEO, Wirrimanu AC. Balgo	9 February 2021
13	Selina Middleton	Project Office, Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation	15 February 2021
14	June Oscar	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner	13 February 2021
15	John Rodriguez	Manager, Fitzroy Crossing IGA	12 February 2021
16	Confidential	Coordinating agency, Kununurra	24 February 2021
17	Confidential	Coordinating agency, Kununurra	24 February 2021
18	Margaret Glass	Youth Services Manager, Halls Creek Shire	11 March 2021
19	Beth Rutter	Kununurra Warringarri Aboriginal Corporation	22 February 2021
20	Staff and Chairperson	Mirima Dawang Woolab-gerring Language and cultural centre, Kununurra	23 February 2021
21	Knut J Olawsky	Manager, Mirima Dawang Woolab-gerring Language and cultural centre, Kununurra	23 February 2021
22	Cathy Cummins	Manager, Waringarri Arts, Kununurra	23 February 2021
24	Giancarlo Mazella	Community Development Officer, Boab Health, Kununurra	24 February 2021
23	Warren Bretag	CEO, Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation, Balgo, East Kimberley	13 May 2021
24	Glen Brooker	Manager, Carlton Hill Station, Kununurra	5 May 2021
25	Linda Sperring	Executive Director, Remote Communities, Department of Communities	19 May 2021
26	CEO and Board members	Jungarni Jutiya Aboriginal Corporation, Halls Creek	22 April 2021 6 December 2021
49	Neil Gower	CEO, Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Corporation, Broome	20 July 2021

Ref	Name	Position held	Date interviewed
50	Nathan McGiver	CEO, Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation, Dampier Peninsula	23 August
51	Chad Sloane	Manager, Community Development, Nyamba Buru Yawuru, Broome	31 August 2021
52	Natasha Matsumoto	Elders and Disability Support, Nyamba Buru Yawuru, Broome	1 September 2021
53	Des Hill	CEO, Kununurra Warringarri Aboriginal Corporation	29 April 2021
54	Ian Trust	Executive Director, Wunan, Kununurra	19 November 2020
55	Wes Morris	KALACC Coordinator	24 November 2020
56	Chris Griffiths	Coordinator, Miriwoong Community Patrol Service, KWAC, Kununurra	22 February 2021
Community people – request to NOT be identified			
	Description	Place	
27	Older lady	Loanbun (at Marra Worra Worra in Fitzroy Crossing)	15 July 2021
28	Lady	Junjuwa (at MWW)	15 July 2021
29	Lady	Kurnangki (at MWW)	15 July 2021
30	Young man	Bungardi (at MWW)	15 July 2021
31	Very senior lady	Muludja	16 July 2021
32	Middle aged man	Muludja	16 July 2021
33	3 young women	Muludja	16 July 2021
34	Middle aged mum and teenage daughter	DarIngunaya	15 July 2021
35	Middle aged couple	Barrawooga	10 August 2021
36	Deputy Principal	Yiyili	13 August 2021
37	Middle aged lady	Yakanarra	11 August 2021
38	Middle aged couple	Wangkatjungka	12 August 2021
39	Senior man	Ngumpan	12 August 2021
40	Senior man	Wangkatjungka	12 August 2021
41	Senior man	Wangkatjungka	12 August 2021
42	Middle aged lady	Wangkatjungka	12 August 2021
43	School Principal	Yakanarra	11 August 2021
44	Manager, Broome Resort	Broome	27 July 2021
45	Older woman	Halls Creek	25 July 2021
46	Older woman	Halls Creek	25 July 2021
47	Older woman	Halls Creek	25 July 2021
48	Cox family	Yiyili	17 August 2021
62	Two women	Moongardie	17 August 2021
53	Gordon family	Yiyili	17 August 2021
54	Cox family	Yiyili	17 August 2021
55	Issacs family	One Arm Point (OAP)	13 August 2021
56	Ejai family	OAP	14 August 2021
57	Angus family	OAP	14 August 2021
58	Yue family	OAP	14 August 2021
59	Agnus family	OAP	15 August 2021
60	CEO	Djarindjin	23 August 2021
61	Manager, Fitzroy Crossing Hardware	Fitzroy Crossing	14 February 2021
62	Alana Hunt	Kununurra	9 September 2021 16 September 2021

