



**Date & Time:** Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June – Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June

To complement the series of focus group sessions, key informant interviews were conducted with Aboriginal corporations or not for profits with a significant Aboriginal client base.

Five interviews were held over the week-commencing 20 June 2011 and a further interview was conducted subsequently with organisations unable to fully participate during the week of consultation. Interviews ran between 30-90 minutes and were held on the following dates:

1. Rose Nowers Childcare Centre, 22 June
  - Louise Horton, Owner/Manager
2. I.B.N (Innawonga, Banjyma, Niapali) Aboriginal Corporation, 22 June
  - Grant Bussell (CEO), Ashley Councillor (Banjyma traditional owner)  
Caroline Lee (Banjyma traditional owner)
3. Youth Involvement Committee, 23 June
  - Gloria Jacob (Director) Vikki Stevens (Manager)
4. Bloodwood Tree Association
  - Bob Neville (CEO), Alfred Barker (Board Member, Kariyarra traditional owner), Telfia Cameron (Board member), Doreen Turland (Board member)
5. Pilbara Indigenous Aboriginal Women's Group
  - Lesley Wood (Regional Coordinator)
6. Yamaji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation
  - Peter Jeffries (a/CEO), Clare Muntinga (communications manager),  
Christine Colgate (policy officer), Rodney Nicole (In-house counsel)

*The above individuals engaged in frank discussions on the understanding that the Pilbara's Port City Growth Plan would extract themes common to more than one interview and although quotes are used in this record to illustrate key points, they are not attributed to any individual, organisation or interview session.*

### **Sessions Objectives and Process**

The aim of these meetings was to gain additional perspective on the key themes from the point of view of people who work closely with Aboriginal people in Port Hedland.

Each of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in a similar way with participants asked to imagine themselves in a successful, well-functioning City of Port Hedland in 2035, describe 'success' from the point of view of Aboriginal communities members, and then imagine what were the key actions (set out in the 2011 Pilbara's Port City Growth Plan) that were most important in helping to achieve the success in 2035. This process allowed stakeholders to set the agenda for the interviews and a 'checklist' of interview questions then guided detailed discussion around: community sector capacity, community facilities, public places, employment, housing and health.





### **Advice on Direction**

The discussions of future needs and aspirations for the Growth Plan have been grouped under the following themes:

- Housing
- Engagement of Indigenous Community and Reconciliation
- Conservation and Heritage
- Place-making
- Youth Facilities
- Education
- Transport
- Health services
- Retail

### **Housing**

Despite the encouragement of interviewees to take a long-term view of the development of a regional city, the current housing issue dominated the opening of all interviews. Affordability of housing was identified as the major growth and community development issue by nearly every group. The issue was understood to include availability, affordability, quality, appropriate housing stock and the service provision to Aboriginal clients in particular.

#### *Address Affordability*

The primary causes of poor affordability were recognised as the scale of mining company needs that push up rents and the limited release of housing lots/dwelling creation.

“It [land releases] is better now than it was five years ago when there wasn’t any releases”

“LandCorp is not releasing the 10 houses per month that were promised”

The effect of urban renewal/New Living program was claimed to be an overall reduction in the stock of social housing and a reliance on the private rental market where affordable housing is more difficult to find.

“With rents at \$1,200, someone must have \$6,000 to \$7,000 in hand before an estate agent will put them forward. That’s tough even for those with a good job with BHP.”

There was also a strong view that the quantum of social/public and affordable housing is insufficient to meet underlying need and greater resourcing of public housing authorities is required.

“Homes West is inadequate; whether they are under resourced themselves or simply mismanaged I don’t know”



“They need to get rid of the Homes West ‘list’; I know people who have been on that thing [list] for years and haven’t got a house yet”

Several affordability strategies were raised by stakeholders that could form part of a successful future for Port Hedland. The Growth Plan was given a copy of a 2008 Stamford’s report into housing affordability. The report was steered by a committee of several Port Hedland community organisations and Chris Adams, then CEO of Town of Port Hedland, participated in preparation of the report. It presents and evaluates more than a dozen models of affordable housing provision and makes a recommendation for a State-backed, locally managed not-for-profit social landlord model.

Other concepts provided by stakeholders during interviews included:

- The ‘gifting’ of housing to a not-for-profit organisation for them to then provide housing for low-income earners on a rent-to-own arrangement. The price of that house to be based on the household’s income at a set rate and term (e.g. 25% of income over a 10-year period).

“It has worked in other places why can’t it work here”

- Access to public housing based on a graduated scale of incomes that recognises the relatively high wages paid in Port Hedland but also the relatively poor affordability / high cost of living. Such a system would address the ‘poverty trap’ of people being forced out of public housing / housing assistance as a result of securing employment.
- Opening up housing assistance to employees of community organisations whose salary would otherwise preclude them from assistance.

“Although it is hard to get good staff, retaining them is harder as [lack of affordable] housing is the main cause; without more support we simply cannot compete with the wage and house packages on offer elsewhere”

It was said that Foundation Housing (working with Aboriginal Housing Services Association) has assessed that it can put transportable 3x2 homes into the Pilbara for \$350,000 (plus land).

The generosity of BHP in providing housing to the community sector at peppercorn rents was acknowledged. And continuing to offer housing in this way as part of an employment package (until such time as the property market is normalised) was seen as a way of addressing the market distortions due to the housing of the operational workforce.

“I lost a girl the other day who wanted to stay with us but she got offered a job driving trucks on the mines; she wanted to stay but I couldn’t offer her enough money to stay. I don’t blame the mining companies though; they have a job to do as well I just think there should be a way of making it a bit easier for us”





“They (BHP) seem to buy all of the houses and leave nothing for us”

### *Address Homelessness*

It is felt that culturally-appropriate housing is required. People are living in fields, tent or cars in South Hedland without access to fresh water and a power source. Some have bad tenant histories and others are from remote communities and prefer camping to any option they may have to share over-crowded accommodation with kin or live in a ‘dry’ shelter.

It was felt consultation should be undertaken to establish the form of culturally appropriate housing provision in Port Hedland. Stakeholders believe the Department of Housing and Works has professionally produced blueprints based on previous consultations.

“There needs to be culturally-appropriate, semi-traditional housing within the city limits – not pushed out of town”

“ Darwin has a park with toilets and showers – it can be done well”

“Some people don’t want to live in houses that are regular 3 bedroom 1 bathroom designed houses; not all Aboriginal people are the same and some may want that but there has to be a level of recognition that ‘normal’ doesn’t work for everyone. That needs to be recognised and catered for”

“The hostel to be built to house people seeking medical attention that come in from communities will help”

It was noted that many dwellings house not just the permanent tenants but also members of their extended family who were classified as transient but often could come into town for extended periods of time. In these instances the residents were obliged to take in members of the extended family and this resulted in overcrowding with some numbers given going up to 20 people for a single abode.

A need for transitional housing - where people from remote communities can be supported to adapt to town living – was viewed as a cost-effective form of social housing provision if handled with sensitivity.

“Transitional housing should have a psych on site, social workers and be run with a firm regime so that people have to pay rent – get them ready to rent from the mainstream market”

Housing integrated into the mainstream can also be more responsive to the particular needs of Aboriginal people. Breezeways and additional bedrooms are relatively modest modifications to standard floor-plans.





### *Improve Housing Services to Indigenous People*

The challenges of maintaining the public housing stock was recognised but the current situation was considered unsustainable. At the acute end of the spectrum, the interviews revealed a need for a more responsive public housing maintenance service:

“I had a staff member who had no hot water at her house for two years. She reported it but it didn’t get done. Maybe she needed to push for it more but I don’t think you have to chase people for something like that once you’ve reported it”

Homemaker and budgeting education was seen as required to help create more successful Aboriginal households – especially to help peoples from communities to transition to living in a regional city and transition from renting to home-ownership. This support needs to operate alongside sanctions imposed by Homewest / social landlords if mutual obligation is to be achieved.

“Home-ownership is just as aspirational among Aboriginal people as it is among the white community”

“All sections of the community need to have an economic interest in this future city and housing is the main store of wealth for all of us. Native Title is a property right – it should count for something”

Comments were sought on treatment of Aboriginal Land Trust enclaves from a resident of Three Mile in the East End. A view was that ownership should not change and development around Three Mile should not be buffered from new development. Instead, housing should be upgraded to integrate better with the new style of homes that will be built around Cooke Point and Pretty Pool. Notwithstanding the critical shortage of accommodation for Aboriginal people, this elderly resident did not see apartments as a desirable in the medium term.

### **Engagement of Indigenous Community, Inclusion & Reconciliation**

Several stakeholders noted a systematic lack of consultation with members of the Indigenous community on their needs. This leads to a lack of understanding of the unique challenges faced by some indigenous groups.

“Council has an Indigenous working group but I don’t know the last time it met. I’ve not been for years”

“Some people get it, some don’t. Department of Lands has been good but FORM doesn’t have a good relationship with local Aboriginal people”



“Change is happening so quickly that areas like 12 Mile are being left behind”

Positive suggestions to improve engagement were suggested:

“A consultative group like an Aboriginal advisory committee with an agenda and responsibility to consult with current housing bodies to be a ‘voice’ for Indigenous community members.”

“There needs to be more community-driven planning. ICC did a survey recently but I don’t know what’s happened to it”

“Growth Plan should build upon Pilbara Future’s Project being run by Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA)”

“When we provide advice on our communities needs, we’re acting as interpreters and should be paid for our time like consultants are”

Part of genuine engagement with the Traditional Owners was development of a comprehensive plan to avoid heritage sites, provide heritage interpretation and transfer land for housing developments and other real estate ventures.

“[There are] good sites in Port at the old hospital site and the school site [for development]”

The social divide among young people in Hedland was characterised in several interviews as a three-way split: Aboriginal, “BHP kids” and Muslims.

The proposed cultural centre was seen as an opportunity to strengthen culture but also to aim reconcile between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginals.

“The cultural centre will be an opportunity for white fellas to learn – for FIFO kids to learn something about this place”

“We need a white fella cultural centre that links Aboriginal culture and history with European history and the present day”

“The town needs a ‘Traditional Owner Plus’ cultural centre that includes all of the community”

“The cultural centre should offer practical things like long day-care, parenting education, recreational and social happenings, a museum, and a ‘Lotteries House-type’ support service for Indigenous community groups”

## **Conservation of Heritage Places**



“The law grounds at 12 Mile need to be protected as the population grows and people want to get out in 4WD. Some other places can be made available for non-Traditional Owners to enjoy and learn about the culture. Similarly, the coast east and west of Hedland is significant and will see more traffic”

“I fear 12 Mile will be bulldozed”

“There needs to be more visible recognition of heritage – some interpretation”

“Cultural rangers should be available at ethnological sites and help all these new people connect with the history of the place and with a whole section of the community”

“Some people starting out as cultural rangers protecting and interpreting sites will transfer to Indigenous-run businesses offering tourism experiences”

“Similarly, marine ranges (there’s a program with WAFIC to secure customary access) can help protect our customary access”

### **Place-making**

There was strong recognition of improvements in Port and South.

“The new town-scaping is awesome. Verges could do with some work – trees for shade and not allowing blue metal. We’d be happy to pay for the water out the front if someone would put in the plants”

However, there were some reservations about the nature of spaces and some uncertainty about the detail of new places being created.

“There’s a lack of meeting places. The old park in South used to be popular. If people sit in the shopping centre, they get moved on or the seats get taken out!”

“Places to sit under a tree and keep cool”

“The landscape doesn’t tell stories. You wouldn’t know, looking at the town, that Aboriginal people ever lived here. It looks like a mining town.”

“There needs to be interpretation: symbols of ownership”

“There’s an opportunity to recognise prior ownership with park names and road names. It might be appropriate to rename South Hedland or parts of it”

“With people living in smaller blocks, we’ll need more small parks for exercise – walking”



“Places to socialise with friends under a tree and be free to drink alcohol like white folks”

As expected, there are concerns about the extent of development in place of outstanding natural beauty. There was recognition that growth may mean more active management of remote beauty spots.

“Coastal planning has tended to be ignored. Leave the beaches alone”

“People need land to go to out of town.”

“Don't expand Pretty Pool”

“Create public spaces at Pretty Pool”

### **Youth Facilities**

The provision of youth facilities was a recurring theme with recognition that the Youth Zone as a major assets to the Town.

“We're excited about the new JD Hardie Centre”

However, expectations are that growth should eventually provide additional and enlarged facilities – many provided by the business sector.

“A bowling alley is something that has been at the top of the request list within Port Hedland for a decade”

Other common aspirations included:

- Rock-climbing wall
- Water slide at pool
- Computer gaming area
- Movie cinemas
- Indoor sporting areas

The lack of free after-school care is felt acutely and contributes to social problems.

“There's a need for diversions from crime – even for kids as young as 10 that are breaking into houses to feed the gambling habits of older siblings or themselves.  
Thursday nights are not working”

“There is funding for something like 36 after-school places”

“I found a four year old wandering around on one of the roundabouts in the middle of the road”



“There needs to be after-school care that is inclusive – not just for Aboriginal kids”

“An after-school centre aimed at 7-10 year olds with tutors to help with homework but also engaging kids in more practical skills like cooking, relationship skills and personal hygiene”

“The next generation of parents need help to understand and own accountability for kids.”

The cost of accessing youth facilities should be considered in the provision of future programs and facilities.

“Sport is good but it is expensive here”

“It's simple things like a system to loan a basketball – it teaches responsibility while making activities more affordable”

Future planning of recreation facilities needs to recognise the harsh Pilbara climate.

“There needs to be places (inside and outside) to hang out. The skate parks work well.”

“There's a need for more indoor basketball courts in this climate”

Sport and pastimes were recognised as vehicles for the engagement of young people in civic life, education and employment

“There are a lot of good things going on for young people. The Hedland Youth Leadership Coalition should get more support”

“Youth programs need to deal with the reality that some kids are quite spoilt. They expect a lot and employment pathways need to be fairly direct because 14 year olds will not get out of bed for less than \$10/hr.”

“In the 20 year timeframe, we should be thinking about a facility for YIC as big as the JD Hardie”

“The existing YIC centre needs to be retained when the organisation moves to Youth Zone. Some clients require a discrete location to access services and the proximity to South Hedland Primary creates opportunities for early language/education interventions”



## Education

### *Early Childhood Education*

There are expectations that Growth Plan will improve access to daycare by putting downward pressure on housing costs – a key driver of the cost of daycare. Cost was cited as the key barrier to young families accessing early learning opportunities and a major factor behind young mums not re-entering the workforce after giving birth. For some, especially those new to town, this lost opportunity for contact leads to feelings of isolation.

“A mother might earn \$550/week at Coles but childcare costs \$500/week now the 17.5% rebate has gone.”

### *Primary School*

Among the stakeholders interviewed, there was more concern about improvements in secondary education than primary.

“At that age [primary], if a child wants to learn they will no matter what”

“The most important thing for kids that age is to make sure that they are in a safe environment”

### *High School*

The quality of high school education is a current concern. Academic achievement is perceived to be much lower than the metropolitan area - as evidenced when local kids go away to boarding schools and (anecdotally) experience difficulty catching up. This feeds into the loss of families at around Year 7 and further distortion of the socio-demographic profile .

“Like a lot of country towns, we lose families at Year 7”

There is an expectation that Growth Plan will allow for better facilities but additional choice and better programs.

“A second high school is something that has to happen sooner rather than later; even if it is simply to give parents the choice of where they could send their kids”

In particular, it was suggested that innovation is required in delivery of educational services to Indigenous youth.

“The town needs a boarding school to address the home situation of many kids. They’d stay during the week; get breakfast and clean clothes; have after-school



tutoring or homework club; would get a good night's sleep and then go home at weekends."

### *Vocational and Higher Education*

A view was expressed that a niche exists for a university as part of a research-led economic development strategy that builds on the existing strengths of the Pilbara economy.

"People have talked about a school of mines – why not?"

There was some recognition that universities will continue to rely on centralised delivery of course using improving information technology, yet the strength of links and in particular, understanding of the specific needs of Indigenous students were seen as important in planning education provision.

"There should be better links between the town and Batchelor rather than unis in Perth"

Views on vocational education were mixed. Some prefer to see TAFE develop to offer an expanded a range of courses including personal growth and development, while others see a need to focus on the work-readiness of young Indigenous people with practical work experience opportunities.

"Pundulmurra needs to be developed into a hostel style setting – but it should be inclusive of oldies because that's how people learn"

"Opportunities to be coached in presentation – how to speak and how to dress at work"

"Cultural work opportunities like Noongar Radio or Kaditj - the Aboriginal-owned café/function centre in Northbridge"

### **Transport**

Access to education, employment and recreation was said to be limited by poor transport.

"The public bus between South and Port goes just twice a day and a better service would help with employment."

"Many young people don't have a driver's licence because owning a car is beyond them; and even if they did have a car, it would be a 'community car' – a de facto taxi service for older members of the family"

"Getting around in the heat is hard work. A dial-up bus services with limited pick up points would help kids take part in evening events and get them home safe"





“Some taxi drivers can be quite racist”

“Some taxi drivers book credit and hold ATM cards until pension day”

### **Health Services**

Gaps that were identified to be addressed in future health service planning were:

- drug and alcohol rehabilitation
- mental health services especially for young people
- primary health care

“There’s a need for an alcohol and drug rehab centre”

“Mental health service provision is poor – young people with any kind of problem end up in lock up or at a YAP shelter, rather than getting the help they need. Or they end up in Graylands and being released weeks later when people realise that’s not the support they need”

“Despite the new hospital, primary health care isn’t keeping up. It’s hard to get an appointment with a dentist and we wait 12 weeks for a scan in Karratha”

“There are just two child health specialist and a massive need. Early intervention would save the health system so much money”

“As we grow into a city, there needs to be more visits by specialists rather than people having to travel to Perth”

“Service provision should be benchmarked and a simple score reported each year so people can see progress being made”

### **Community Group Capacity Building**

The not-for-profit sector was recognised as key to helping the most disadvantaged people to adapt to growth pressures and opportunities was identified for Growth Plan to address the sector’s capacity to assist its clients.

“A resources centre would have people who are networked into the Federal and State agencies that could provide useful advice. They’d be access to video conferencing facilities and specialists to help us improve our efficiency and with one-off tasks.”

“We know we need to change our constitution but don’t know where to start”

“A Lotteries House-style support service should be run by Port Hedland groups - not WACOSS”



“Funding comes with strings. There’s a massive amount of work proportionately in reporting and evaluating programs and that’s not our core skill. We could use a secretariat service”

“There needs to be more partnerships with outside, State-wide bodies such as Fairbridge – we can learn better from others”

“The FaHCSIA people can’t afford to visit us more than once per year. We’d like know what’s going on; get more support”

“There needs to be have better-qualified people overseeing programs in these agencies”

A strategy to hand more decision-making power to local agencies and address the uncertainty of government funding rounds, was to establish a community foundation.

“A trust fund would take 0.0x% of royalties and build up a fund to support continuity of local social programs – not infrastructure. It would have its own board with the State and the resources companies represented but a majority of Hedland not-for-profits.”

## **Retail**

There is an expectation that Growth Plan will facilitate the growth and diversification of the future retail offering.

“The town needs affordable retail like K-Mart. It would be good to have the choice of a \$300 dress or an \$80 dress”

“We don’t have any of the home-ware shops Karratha has”

Specifically, the link to affordable housing and wage pressures need to be normalised.

“We know wages are killing retail. People get \$30-35ph for cleaning”

“Why would you work in retail for \$700/week when you can get \$2,000/week operating a water truck?”