





Integrating programs

From the Regional Director, Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara



Welcome to the 2016 Winter edition of *Palya*, where we share stories from the Alinytjara Wilu<u>rara</u> Natural Resources Management Board and DEWNR's Natural

Resources Alinytjara Wilurara (NR AW).

Matt Ward is usually in the Regional Director's chair, but I'm filling his role for a few months while he's taking on a different role in the department. I've been with the NR AW team since February, and have had a great time meeting people

INVITATION

The Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board invite you to join us on Facebook www.facebook.com/awnrm

AW weather stations Check out data from the weather stations in the AW region on... http://aws.awnrm.sa.gov.au/

Next AW NRM Board meeting: 22-24 August 2016, Pt Lincoln

Ceduna Arts and Cultural Centre
Features genuine Aboriginal art
2 Eyre Highway, Ceduna

and seeing some of our great on-ground works programs.

As always, we've had a busy six months.

In April the region hosted a visit by the Natural Resources Committee of State Parliament. The six state Members of Parliament and two staff toured the southern part of AW region (see page 2-3).

We've continued our Healthy Country Planning in partnership with communities and Co-management Boards. This local-level planning approach will provide us with a suite of Healthy Country Plans that have been developed with key landholding authorities and communities of the region. These plans will form a strong basis for our next Regional NRM Plan (due in 2020).

South Australia's 13 Co-management Boards and Advisory Committees (including Mamungari, Yumbarra and Nullarbor Parks and Tallaringa within the AW region) came together in February for a state-wide co-management workshop held at Adelaide Zoo. The workshop allowed stories and learnings to be shared between the groups, and culminated in the release of the 'Strong People, Strong Country' booklet and video (see DEWNR website for more information).

After a busy time packing and filing, the NR AW team in Adelaide moved into a new home at 81 Waymouth Street, along with about 900 of our colleagues in the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR). The building has a dedicated Reconciliation Room on Level 10, which can be booked for meetings by Aboriginal groups at no cost, so please contact us if you'd like to take up this opportunity.

We've also been busy delivering our onground works program, including Buffel grass and feral camel management, installation of toilets at three key visitor sites in our southern parks, and completion of a track rationalisation project in the Nullarbor area to improve visitor safety and protect habitats.

Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara and the AW NRM Board look forward to continuing to support the region's communities to deliver the Regional NRM Plan and the National Landcare Programme in partnership with the South Australian and Australian Governments.

Palya,



Fiona Gill
A/Regional Director,
Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilugara

Where we are and what we do

The Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management Region covers the northwest quarter of South Australia. In Pitjantjatjara, alinytjara means 'north' and wilurara means 'west'. The Region spans more than a quarter of a million square kilometre and has a population of approximately 2000 people, many of whom identify with the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra, Kokatha, Mirning or Wirangu peoples.

Natural Resources Management (NRM) is an approach to protecting land for the mutual benefit of people and the environment.

The AW NRM Board is the only all Aboriginal NRM Board in Australia.



Members of SA's Natural Resources Committee join AW NRM Board Presiding member Parry Agius at Head of Bight

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Natural Resources Committee learn about AW's past, present and potential

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Celebrating the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



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Marine Debris Arts Program, Schoolbased Trainee and Beach Clean-ups



From the Presiding Member



Welcome to the Winter edition of Palya 2016. With the new financial year I am pleased to welcome two new members to our Board.

They are both outstanding individuals whose skills, knowledge and experience will undoubtedly prove invaluable in delivery of the AW NRM Board's objectives.

I also extend my sincere thanks to our retiring members whose contributions to the Board and the people of our region have been many (see page 4 of this edition).

Having attended the Council of NRM Presiding Members forum in May, I was pleased by the level of discussion around developing mechanisms to bring state and national initiatives to the collective attention of the regions.

Engagement and communications across all levels was the central theme of the forum. From people who live in communities to Federal Government Ministers and all parties in between.

Developing strategic alliances and strong partnerships has always played a major role in the ongoing success of natural resource management in the Alinytjara Wilurara region. The Board remains committed to building on and supporting its extensive network to achieve the best results for our unique region and for the people who live there.



Parry Agius

Presiding Member

Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources

Management Board



In early April 2016, six members of the Natural Resources Committee (NRC) of Parliament (with two staff) headed into the Far West Coast's remote desert country to visit some of Alinytjara Wilurara's (AW) most enigmatic landmarks. From the Maralinga Village, which remains virtually unchanged since the 1950s, to the spectacular Googs Lake, past desert blowholes and across to the Head of Bight Whale Centre, the group learned first-hand about the past, present and potential of the southern AW region.

The NRC delegation was accompanied by Parry Agius, Presiding Member of the AW Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board and DEWNR staff.

At each location visited, local Traditional Owners joined the group and discussed their views on ways that communitybased NRM might achieve positive social and economic outcomes for their people as well as the environment.

L-R: Parry Agius (AW NRM Presiding Member) with Robin Matthews (Maralinga Village caretaker), Ms Annabel Digance MP, John Dawkins MLC, Mr Jon Gee MP, Gerry Kandelaars MLC, Ms Steph Key MP, Bruce Macpherson (NR AW) and Mr Peter Treloar MP

NRC members embraced the opportunity to learn about the people, their culture and their land, talking informally with community members and the DEWNR staff who work beside them.

The group first visited Oak Valley Community (approx. 500 kms north west of Ceduna) where they were met by Roger Peterson, the community Men's Activity Supervisor. After Bruce Macpherson discussed NR AW's

Above: L-R: Yasmin Wolf (A/Manager, Co-management and Public Lands), Patrick Dupont (Executive Officer - Natural Resources Committee), Steph Key MP (NRC Presiding Member), Michelle Naylon and Wayne Haseldine (both from the West Mallee Protection Group), Wanda Miller (Yumbarra Co-management Board), Mr Peter Treloar MP, Fiona Gill (NR AW Regional Director), Hon John Dawkins MLC, Robbie Sleep (NR AW/EP Senior Ranger), Hon Gerry Kandelaars MLC, Mrs Annabel Digance MP, Tammy Cox (NR EP Ranger), Parry Agius (AW NRM Board Presiding Member), Ms Barbara Coddington (NRC Research Officer), Tim Moore (Manager, Strategy, Knowledge and Sustainablity) and Mr Jon Gee MP.



Community Engagement and Training Strategy for SA's Far West Coast with the group at the Community Hall, Roger showed them the infrastructure that supports the community's water supply.

From Oak Valley the group flew to Maralinga Village (approx. 380 kms from Ceduna) where caretaker Robin Matthews, escorted them on a tour of the Maralinga 1950's atomic bomb test sites and Maralinga Village. The group were able to see first hand the potential of the now deserted village as an historically significant tourist attraction. The dreadful impact that these tests had and continue to have on the region and its people was also acknowledged.

Back in Ceduna the politicians met the staff of the Natural Resources Centre along with representatives from various co-management groups. The representatives later escorted the touring group to Yumbarra Conservation Park to show them the work that had been done to accommodate increasing visitation around the vast and beautiful Googs Lake. There they were treated to a rare sight as the salt lake, which is usually dry, had been spectacularly filled by recent heavy rainfalls.

At the lake, Wayne Haseldine from the West Mallee Protection Group, talked about AW NRM projects undertaken with Traditional Owners. Wanda Miller and Leonard Miller Snr from the Yumbarra Co-management Board also talked about co-management and how working together is achieving Healthy Country outcomes.

The following day the group visited the remote Aboriginal community of Yalata where they were met by the CEO Desley Culpin and AW NRM Board Member Mima Smart. Community members later joined the discussions for morning tea.

Next stop was the Head of Bight Whale Centre where they met Dirk Holman (Far West Coast Marine Parks Coordinator) who talked about the region's Marine Parks. They were also joined by Kerry Colbung from the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) who provided some insight into the ALT and how it operates in the region.

After withstanding the blasting winds on the cliff-side whale viewing platforms the group reconvened at Twin Rocks where Nathan Williams (AW Project Officer), Yasmin Wolf and Dirk Holman talked about the region's highly successful coastal projects.

At the nearby Nullarbor Caves, Clem Lawrie and Dorcas Miller from the **Nullarbor Advisory Committee talked** to the visitors about co-management of the Nullarbor Parks and prospective tourism opportunities.

After travelling a long stretch of the Nullarbor Plain the group veered toward the coast where they were met by Senior Ranger Robbie Sleep. He told them about what was involved, and achieved, in the track rationalisation works, and rehabilitation of camping areas across the Nullarbor coastal area.



Discussions continue in the Nullarbor Caves

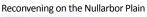
On returning to Ceduna the group visited the Aboriginal Arts and Culture Centre where Kirsten Bobyk, Manager of the Centre, introduced the artists in residence. She talked about the hugely successful GhostNets project and plans for the future work together with Natural Resources AW.

On conclusion of the tour the visitors debriefed in Ceduna before catching their flight back to Adelaide.

Aside from NRM matters, community members also spoke about themes such as housing and employment, and the opportunities for improved transport and tourism infrastructure.

The Natural Resources Committee is currently preparing a report about its visit to the southern Alinytjara Wilurara lands. This report will be tabled in Parliament and will include recommendations for future management of the region.

AW and EP staff who had worked to make this trip both enjoyable and of value to the NRC were well rewarded when Presiding Member Hon Steph Key MP said it was one of the most varied and well-organised regional trips the committee had ever undertaken.







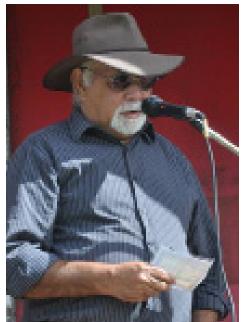
AW NRM Board welcomes new members and farewells some long time greats

The Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management (AW NRM) Board is delighted to welcome two new members to their ranks, both of whom bring with them a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of the region and its people.

Peter Miller has been involved in community affairs for the last 30 years in and around Ceduna. He has been Chairperson of a number of key organisations in the region including Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation, Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service and the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation and five years as Executive Chairperson for the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia.

"Mr Miller's experience in strategic business planning, corporate governance and finance management, together with his broad understanding of local and state issues is highly relevant to the continued success in engagement and delivery of on-ground works" said the AW NRM Board's Presiding Member Parry Agius.

Peter Miller



"We are also very pleased that Kristy Richards joined us in April. She has lived in and around Yalata Community for many years and is well versed in Aboriginal Lore. With a Bachelor of Science Degree in Indigenous Community Management and Development, and extensive experience working in remote Aboriginal communities in both South



Kristy Richards

Australia and the Northern Territory, she is undoubtedly qualified to make a valuable contribution to the Board's future endeavours" said Mr Agius.

As an Aboriginal Lands Trust board member, Kristy has a clear understanding of land management principles involving land under the ownership, care and control of Aboriginal people.

Farewell and thank you

The Board also extends its sincere thanks to retiring Board members Brian Queama and Rose Lester for their many years of service and contributions to the strategic development of its policies and plans, as well as for their support on a range of successful on-ground NRM outcomes.



Brian Queama

Mr Queama started with the AW NRM Board in 2011 bringing with him a solid understanding of regional land issues through his years employed as a Yalata Land Management Ranger. As a respected Elder, he has held a number of other significant positions including as a member of the Tullawon Health Board, the Maralinga Tjarutja Council, and Yalata Community Council.

Rose Lester interviewing Minister Hunter MP on her Radio Program Paper Tracker







Brain and Rose with the 2013 AW NRM Board members: Back L-R Parry Agius, Michael Haynes, Brian Queama, Sydney Chamberlain. Seated: Gary Lewis, Rose Lester, Mima Smart

"Brian's close relationship with the people of Oak Valley and Yalata Communities and his active participation in on-ground works contributed strongly to the Board's successful engagement, training and works delivery with local community members" Mr Agius said.

Rose Lester started with the Board in 2010. As a landholder for over 20 years, her first-hand experience managing Walatina cattle station in the APY Lands, gave her valuable insight into issues such as soil conservation, grassland maintenance and stock viability assessment. She also worked extensively as an Anangu interpreter for a variety of government departments and the South Australian courts.

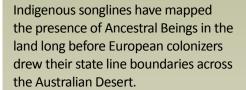
"As a Yankunytjatjara woman, Rose showed a strong commitment to land and water conservation, as well as cultural heritage. As a member of the AW NRM Board she was instrumental in the development of numerous policies and programs related to the control of pest animals (eg dingoes, feral camels/ horses/cats) and plants, particularly Buffel grass. We are confident that she will continue to pursue her convictions to ensuring the land and people are cared for and that Aboriginal culture is better understood and respected" said Mr Agius.

NAIDOC 2016

Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture: Songlines

Songlines: the living narrative of our nation was the theme for this year's **NAIDOC** Week.

Songlines passed down for thousands of years are central to **Aboriginal and Torres** Strait islander people and the preservation of their culture.



The journeys of the creation ancestors connect the people and their land, the animals they hunt, the foods they gather, the life-giving waterholes, their related languages and kinship structures.

South Australians from across the state came together at various venues to join in Songlines themed NAIDOC Week celebrations.

Organised by the Ceduna NAIDOC Committee, a free public concert, held on the Foreshore, kicked-off NAIDOC week celebrations in Ceduna.

In Adelaide, AW's Casey Reynolds was on hand at the Family Fun Day, held in Victoria Park, to chat with people about our region's NRM work.

Other celebrations included a march from Tarndanyangga to Parliament House and a Ball held at the Hilton Hotel.

Insert: Seven Sisters Songline, by Josephine Mick, Pipalyatjara, 1994.

Background



National NAIDOC Week, is the annual celebration of the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Minister Kyam Maher encouraged the people of South Australia to participate in the NAIDOC celebrations.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are the oldest living cultures on the planet, so I would encourage all South Australians to get involved in NAIDOC Week activities, and to reflect on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people's contribution to our society" he said.

"The State Government is committed to the path of Reconciliation.

DEWNR's Keisha Weetra, Casey Reynolds and Errol Lovegrove at the Victoria Park Family Fun Day



Songline references: Australian National University, The School of Archaeology and Anthropology website

Helping Create a Modern Outback





The key focus of the Modern Outback Forum held in March this year was bringing policy in line with the unique needs of the people, and the land, in Outback Australia.

As a member of the Rangeland NRM Alliance, a network of 14 regional natural resource management organisations from across Australia, the AW NRM Board actively supports this national collaborative approach.

Tim Moore, Alinytjara Wilurara's Strategy, Knowledge and Sustainability Manager, attended the forum held in Parliament House, Canberra.



Above: AW's Tim Moore with Gregory Andrew, Threatened Species Commissioner

"The most important thing the Modern Outback Forum does is help politicians and policy makers better understand context, the realities that people living in the bush face every day" said Tim.

Coordinated by Rangeland NRM Alliance and Pew Charitable Trust the forum brought together people who work and live in outback regions with leaders, decision makers and policy makers.

Speakers discussed various rangeland policy issues, followed by a number of panel discussions around Healthy Country, Political Insight and Healthy Communities.

Local member for Grey, Rowan Ramsey MP, joined Senator Rachel Siewert, Warren Snowdon MP and Mark Coulton MP in a panel discussion.

Highlights/Notable outcomes:

- issues faced by all the sectors present were very similar
- one size does not fit all policy flexibility is vital to success
- people who live in remote locations are affected by policy, they need to be involved in its development

Below: Martu Ranger Slim Williams with Joel Fitzgibbon MP, Shadow Minister for Agriculture



- Economic imperatives are important to get attention
- Large complex issues have gained traction through targeted (long term) work.

Outback policy development needs to account for the following factors:

- 1. Long Term: Remote Australia requires a long-term policy support and solutions.
- 2. Unique Design: Policy support and solutions must be designed for the unique needs of the Outback.
- 3. Local Input: To be effective, policies developed for Outback Australia must involve local people.
- 4. Inter-linked: A modern Outback will be achieved through policies that sustain its people and value its

The next step will be to define the statement of intent and contact stakeholders to get in-principle support. This will be undertaken by the Rangeland NRM Alliance and Pew Charitable Trust.

"While AW's core focus is environmental in nature, the way it is delivered can support significant social and economic improvements within our region's Communities. We recognise that our commitment to the health of the land and its people remains intricately interwoven.

"We completely support the Rangelands Alliance and Pew Charitable Trust in these long term commitments to build relationship bridges between politicians and the people of the bush" said Tim.

For further information contact: Kate Forrest: kate.forrest@dcq.org.au Rangelands NRM Alliance Coordinator





Celebrates Reconciliation in Ceduna

Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara's Reconciliation gathering held in Ceduna on 1 June, attracted over 200 attendees with around 70% being Aboriginal people from remote Communities as well as locals from around Ceduna.

The clear blue-sky day was perfect for a BBQ, and people gathered from near and far to mingle and chat in the true spirit of reconciliation, mutual understanding and respect.

The event was hosted by the AW NRM Board whose members joined attendees and talked with them about the Board's role in supporting communities achieve their NRM goals both now and in the future.

School children and teachers from the Ceduna Area School, representatives from the local police and CFS, tourists, casual shoppers, long time and new residents and visitors from out-lying communities all clearly enjoyed

themselves with many taking the opportunity to learn more about NRM from the AW Reconciliation brochures and by talking to the staff and Board members.

The crew from the Ceduna Natural Resources Centre did a fantastic job of helping out on the day and in managing all the background logistics that supported such a great outcome.

Below: AW NRM Board's Presiding Member Parry Agius (left) and retiring member Brian Queama





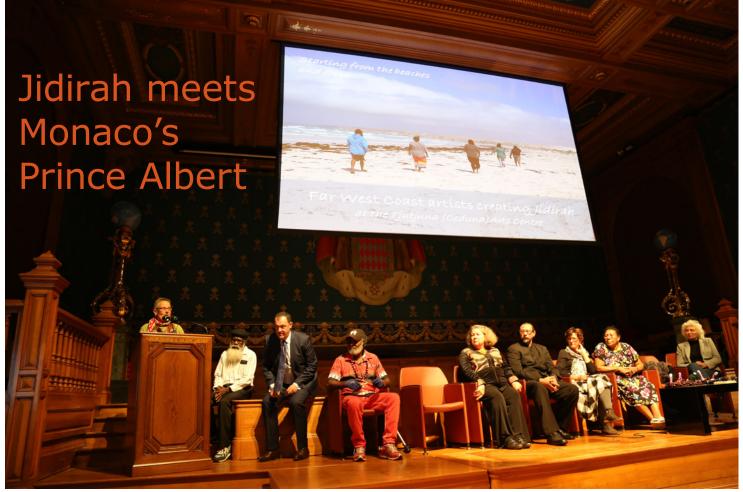
L-R: Andrew Gravestock (School Principal), Julie Cox (Aboriginal Education Officer), Latisha Richards (AW Trainee), Alkira Saunders, Kyra Dudley (students), Kris Knudsen (Aboriginal Education Officer) and NR AW's Community Engagement Manager Bruce Macpherson

AW NRM Board members meet the gathering crowd

AW staff man the BBQ: L-R Codee Spitzkowsky, Brett Backhouse, Casey Reynolds, Helen Donald and Latisha Richards







Pam Diment tells the story of Jidirah's creation and the issues associated with marine debris at the Exhibition Dinner attended by Prince Albert II and various other dignitaries

In April this year, Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara's (NR AW) powerful message about the threat that marine debris presents to marine life on our shores, gained the attention of an influential international audience.

Jidirah, the now famous marine debris whale sculpture created by West Coast Aboriginal artists, now hangs proudly in Monaco's Oceanographic Museum as part of the Indigenous Art TABA NABA Australia, Oceania Arts exhibition.

The exhibition was officially opened by Prince Albert II of Monaco whose commentary highly supported both the artists and the conservation message behind their creations.

The creation of Jidirah was part of a nationwide collaborative project undertaken by GhostNets Australia.

GhostNets Australia maintains a simple philosophy: Saltwater people working together... everyone, from ranger to researcher, who cares for the marine environment, is a saltwater person and only by working together can we achieve change.

The GhostNets message rang true to Yasmin Wolf (then Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara's Coast and Marine Officer) who, in 2014 initiated the South Australian West Coast project in collaboration with Anangu Arts.

Collection of the marine debris was undertaken as part of NR AW's coastal program which was funded through an Australian Government grant. Aboriginal Rangers from the remote Community of Yalata and women from the Yalata Women's Centre, supported

by Jess Viersma (Yalata Women's Centre Coordinator) collected marine debris from a number of beaches from Smoky Bay to the Head of Bight.

The types, amounts and locations where debris was collected was recorded to provide data for ongoing conservation research. It was then transported to Ceduna for the marine sculpture artists.

Aboriginal artists from across the west coast region worked at the Ceduna (Tjutjuna) Arts Centre to create







Never too young to learn new skills - Tjatjuna Arts Centre

numerous small sculptures as well as the four meter whale sculpture Jidirah.

With GhostNets artists Sue Ryan and Gina Allain facilitating and the then Tjutjuna Arts Coordinator Pam Diment, coordinating the project, the resulting artworks were unique and captivating.

Mirning Elder, Docas Miller named the sculpture Jidirah which comes from Mirning Tjukurpa (Dreaming).

The incredible journey of Jidirah began with its first public exhibition at Ceduna Memorial Hall. From there it took pride of place at the OUR MOB exhibition in the Adelaide Festival Centre.

With the support of GhostNets, *Jidirah* was then exhibited at Toronga Zoo for

Below: Hanging the marine sculptures inside the Museum as part of the Oceania Arts exhibition



West coast artists working on the whale sculpture



Above: Monaco's Oceanographic Museum on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea





Pam Diment helping sort marine debris

six months where it caught the attention of a well known Australian Indigenous Art Collector. The sculpture was later purchased by Monaco's Oceanographic Museum with all the proceeds to be used to support a similar West coast Aboriginal marine debris art project.

The Indigenous Art TABA NABA Australia, Oceania Arts exhibition also included works done with ERUB Art (Torres Straits) and Pormpuraaw Arts (Cape York).

Pam Diment was delighted to be invited by the Gallery to come to Monaco to help hang the sculpture. Accompanied by her husband Graham, she spent 10 days working at the gallery on installation of the exhibition items.

Pam later joined Prince Albert II and a long list of other dignitaries for dinner at the gallery and at very short notice was asked to give a speech. Armed with a "just in case" presentation showing scenes of the Nullarbor's spectacular cliffs, Yalata Rangers and women collecting debris and the artists at work she shared the incredible journey of Jidirah.

"The feedback was fantastic. It made me feel incredibly proud of everyone who was involved as well as of our amazing country. Knowing that our sculpture has helped highlight the issue of marine debris across the globe was just magic" said Pam.



In mid-December last year, local traditional owners from the APY Lands mustered and managed the removal of over 100 feral donkeys from the region. This brought the total to over 850 donkeys removed, 269 being females ("jennys"), since the program began in September 2015.

The Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands occupy 103,000 square kilometres in the North West corner of South Australia.

Mustered feral donkey's in holding yards



Donkeys were introduced to the region in the 1870s when European explorers first traversed the country closely followed by "doggers" (people collecting dingo scalps to receive a government bounty). After the introduction of motorised vehicles. freed donkeys established a feral population that now significantly impacts on the region's ecology and economy as well as presents various safety concerns.

Over the course of 2015, APY traditional owners were approached by a number of private business operators interested in harvesting feral donkeys for sale to newly opening markets. However, being new markets, the relative value of donkeys and the various parts of the business supply chain

Feral donkey roaming into Community playground



were not able to operate effectively.

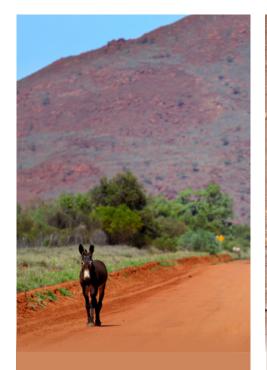
While Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara (NR AW) support the principle of removal and economic development, it is essential for business opportunities to be effectively understood before substantial economic support can be provided. Both public and private benefits need to be clear in such arrangements.

To help test market viability and supply chain dynamics while ensuring good value for public investment, NR AW developed a short term pilot study to add clarity about the viability and sustainability of feral donkey market opportunities, and the relative ratios of public to private benefit.

With donkey meat and products seen as a premium product in China, there is strong interest and demand from feral donkey buyers in Central Australia at present. APY's feral donkeys are trucked from the lands directly to a holding facility prior to processing in the NT, with likely final markets for meat and skins in China.

"The removal of donkeys from the APY Lands can be most effectively undertaken by local Anangu as it





requires constant monitoring and ongoing on-ground management. The local Traditional Owners are familiar with the geographic features of this vast and remote landscape and are familiar with the seasonal habits and movements of feral populations. They are well placed to undertake the work involved in removal of these animals and are strongly motivated for cultural reasons to care for their country.

"Such good results would not have been able to be achieved without the close partnership and cooperation of the APY Pastoral working group and partners including the Indigenous Land Corporation, and the engagement of traditional owners and APY **Executive Members like Trevor** Adamson operating with external commercial operators" said NR AW's Strategy, Knowledge and Sustainability Manager, Tim Moore.

"It's great to have opportunities for us to provide young fellas with the chance to get paid work catching these donkeys and the opportunity for us to look to start our own businesses taking care of our country in the right way" said Mr Adamson, APY Executive Member.



For the first time ever, researchers from the University of Adelaide have been able to non-invasively study the inner workings of wombat warrens, with a little help from groundpenetrating radar.

Despite being the faunal emblem of South Australia, very little is known about the burrowing habits of the southern hairy-nosed wombat.

As part of a larger study into wombat conservation, Mr Michael Swinbourne, PhD candidate in the University's School of Biological Sciences, set out to test a new way of mapping wombat warrens.

"A major problem we are grappling with is understanding just how many wombats there are and whether their numbers are increasing or decreasing," Mr Swinbourne says.

"At the moment we use satellite imagery to count the warrens and then use that information to estimate the numbers of wombats living inside. This method isn't perfect because we don't know much about how wombats share their warrens."

Using ground-penetrating radar meant Mr Swinbourne and his team were able to map warrens built underneath thick layers of hard

limestone – which occurs throughout much of the wombat's range.

"The aim of this project was to map the extent of wombat warrens in different ground conditions; to gain a better understanding of the relationship between how they look on the outside and what goes on underneath," he says.

They found warrens built under limestone differ substantially to soil warrens, being an extensive series of tunnels and chambers rather than simply a discrete tunnel underground.

"These findings have important implications for how we estimate the numbers of wombats, and also how we think about the social structure of a wombat colony. They might be more social than we previously thought," Mr Swinbourne says.

Wombats are considered an agricultural pest because their burrowing activity can cause damage to farm infrastructure and equipment as well as crops.

Lessening the southern hairy-nosed wombat's impact on agriculture on one hand, while conserving it on the other, continues to be a significant challenge for conservationists.

Article published: 5 Feb 2016 University of Adelaide Photo: Kalyob, via Wikimedia Commons

Buffel Free GVD

Working together to save the Great Victoria Desert

Buffel grass is recognised by the Australian Government as a key threat to native biodiversity in Australia's arid heartland.

As an aggressive colonizer it rapidly transforms landscapes causing significant losses of native flora and fauna and negatively impacts on Indigenous cultural practices, including the availability of bush tucker.

The relatively untouched Great Victoria Desert (GVD) has been identified as one of the few landscapes where broad-scale Buffel grass invasion could potentially be averted.

With the GVD spanning the South Australia, Western Australia border, close cross-border collaboration is key to effective Buffel grass management of the region. Buffel grass does not recognise borders.

The Ten Deserts Initiative, started in 2014, supports cross-border collaboration to improve arid zone land management outcomes.

Buffel growing near Oak Valley Community



Although a number of Indigenous land management groups are currently undertaking Buffel grass management programs in and around the GVD, the Ten Deserts Initiative proposes bringing these groups, and other stakeholders together in a coordinated and targeted way to develop and implement a strategic Buffel grass eradication plan.

All about Buffel

Buffel grass, Cenchrus ciliaris, is a deep-rooted, perennial grass which is believed to have originally arrived in Australia with the import of Afghan camels in the 1860s.

It is a native of eastern Africa and Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Buffel grass was also planted in



Early camel expedition using Afghan camels in 1896 Photo courtesy of State Library of South Australia

the 1960s across central Australia as a pasture grass and dust suppressant. It has since spread across large areas of Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

South Australia is the only state or territory so far to have officially identified Buffel grass as a weed.

Buffel as pasture

Buffel grass is widely considered the species of choice by pastoralists because of its wide adaptation ability and tolerance of drought, fire and over-grazing. Being high yielding and easy to establish and maintain, it has financially benefited many pastorallybased rural communities.

Why keep the GVD free of Buffel grass

The Great Victoria Desert is one of the last deserts in Australia that maintains its precolonial biodiversity. The importance of ensuring this pristine habit remains unspoiled is immeasurable.

Cattle feeding on Buffel grass in the APY Lands







Friends of the Great Victoria desert undertaking research into rare insect species

Buffel grass takes nutrients out of the ground and displaces native grasses along water courses, expansive rangeland grasslands and arid land ranges. It transforms arid landscapes into a monoculture destroying native grasses, shrubs and fire-sensitive trees.

Being significantly more flammable than native grasses, Buffel grass produces high-intensity fires which damage ecosystems never previously exposed to such extreme temperatures. Such fires also present a risk of damage to valuable infrastructure and property as well as threaten the well-being of people in the region.

Currently Buffel grass is only found in a few isolated locations in the GVD and in larger abundance in some surrounding areas. It is imperative that action be taken now to prevent it from forming monocultures that, once established in the GVD, will be almost impossible to eradicate.

Giant nest building Mallee Fowl



The Ten Deserts Initiative

The Ten Deserts Initiative supports collaboration between Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia arid land management groups. See http://www.tendeserts.org for more information.

The Ten Deserts Initiative supports bringing groups together to collate cross-border data, assess cross-border resources and develop a single action plan that can be effectively undertaken across the GVD.

The Buffel Free GVD vision is long term total eradication of Buffel grass in the Great Victoria Desert through the development and implementation of a collaborative strategic plan.

At present, a working group made up of representatives from crossborder land management groups and interested parties, is in the process of developing the plan as well as leveraging resources and support.

Spectacular lizards of the GDV: Bearded Dragon (below) Thorny Devil Moloch horridus (below right)



Bringing knowledge and resources together

The integration and collation of relevant cross-border information will be invaluable to the development of a Buffel Free GVD eradication strategy.

In SA a Buffel Task Force (through Biosecurity SA, and funded by the Native Vegetation Unit of the Department of Environment, Water & Natural Resources) was established in 2013 to:

- gather base data about the spread of Buffel grass
- develop management plans to minimise the inadvertent spread of Buffel grass by human activity
- regulate use and movement of Buffel grass across all SA land tenures
- develop and maintain early detection and eradication mechanisms.

This program finished on 30 June 2016.

In South Australia, Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara (NR AW) is taking the lead on working towards a Buffel Free GVD, while in Western Australia, Spinifex Land Management supported by Rangelands NRM are playing a crucial collaborative role.

To add your support behind making the Buffel Free GVD vision reality, please contact Ten Deserts Coordinator, Jimmy Cocking on 0423 511 931 or email coordinator@tendeserts.org



Above: Blind marsupial mole Notoryctes typhlops





Setting up camp after a long day spraying along the rail line Photography: Andrew Sleep

Along the railway tracks that carry travellers across the Nullarbor on the famous Indian Pacific comes an unwelcome visitor that has no intention of a taking a return trip.

Trains travelling east to west along the line inadvertently carry and distribute Buffel grass seed from infested areas into relatively untouched landscapes in the Alinytjara Wilurara region.

Monitoring and managing outbreaks on the track verges and Community roads is regularly undertaken by DEWNR staff to keep potential infestations from occurring.

In May this year, a crew from the Ceduna Natural Resources Centre, together with a four-man work crew from Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation (CAC) set out to inspect 250km of road and rail tracks for signs of Buffel grass. This included road and rail verges and areas around

The dual hose reel carrier mounted on the ATV

the rail sidings between Ooldea and Malbooma (approx. 250kms).

Using experience and initiative, Senior Ranger Robbie Sleep had a custom dual hose reel carrier made and then mounted on the all terrain vehicle (ATV) before setting out on the trip. It proved highly effective, significantly increasing efficiency and reducing time in the field.

Buffel grass, in varying stages of growth, was found across scattered locations.

Mobile backpack units were used to eradicate isolated hard-to-see plants spreading away from rail and road infestations. Some of these were up to 200 meters from road and rail associated sites.

"The movement of maintenance equipment and machinery associated with the railway line still seems to be the main reason for the continued spread of Buffel in this area. It's important that

plant operators are really clear about how to minimise spread from the work area" said Robbie.

Tarcoola, (the nearest occupied siding) to the East of Malbooma was particularly infested with Buffel grass after recent localised rain, extending well into surrounding paddocks from the roads and railway line.

"We currently spray 30kms east of the AW region's border, between Lyons and Malbooma sidings, to ensure a buffer into our region and particularly into Googs track" said Robbie.

All the Buffel grass sites are recorded to provide comparison data for future control strategies.

Mature Buffel grass growing along roadside









Scientist's research brings him back to the Far West Coast

Although First Nation people have claimed that there are approximately 20-30 different edible larvae in Australia, only the witchetty grub (Endoxyla leucomochla) has been formally classified as edible.

Aboriginal man Conrad Bilney is however, hoping to change this through his PhD research by locating and identifying edible larvae from across the country.

He has already successfully uncovered 22 of the species known to Aboriginal people.

As a scholar at La Trobe University, he is applying a scientific approach to his research, locating, collecting and DNA barcoding as many of the '20-30' edible insect larvae as possible.

Endoxyla leucomochla is a species of cossid moth endemic to Australia. The larva of the moth is commonly known as the "witchetty grub" or "Maku" in Pitjatjantjara language, and was widely used as bush food by the first people. The caterpillar grows to a length of about 7 cm, and pupates underground inside its tunnel.

Maku "witchetty grubs" (photo by Kevin Chan)

Norman Tindale (1900-1996) scientifically classified E. leucomochla as the first, and so far, only edible insect species in Australia.

Conrad's research is about matching adult Lepidoptera and Cossidae specimens to larvae collected so far. This has never been done before in Australia.

The viability and sustainability of edible insect larvae will play a part in predicted food shortages in future years. Conrad's findings will contribute to addressing this need and help to retain important Aboriginal knowledge.

Conrad has been invited by NR AW to give a talk at the Ceduna NRC to explain his work and findings to the broader community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. The opportunity for discussion on Bush Foods, Traditional knowledge and how to keep this knowledge alive will undoubtedly be of great interest the FWCAC and AW NRM.

A date for his talk has not yet been set.

Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara (NR AW) currently has a number of staff studying Cert 3 in Conservation and Land Management. Conrad's research will be of particular interest to them when they undertake one of the required competencies - to Collect and Preserve Biological Samples.

"Not only will this research produce important scientific outcomes but my undertaking these studies clearly demonstrate to the region's younger generation that gaining scientific expertise can be achieved by one of their own" said Conrad.



National first for Aboriginal governance in SA

A nation-leading approach to Aboriginal community governance is set to deliver significant benefits for Aboriginal people throughout South

After extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities and groups, the State Government has formalised the Aboriginal Regional Authority (ARA) Policy.

Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Minister Kyam Maher said the new policy marked a major shift in the way Aboriginal South Australians and governments do business together.

First Aboriginal Regional Authorities recognised

Three Aboriginal organisations have been recognised as South Australia's first Aboriginal Regional Authorities, Aboriginal Regional Authority policy.

The Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation, Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association, and the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority will form a new partnership with the government to enhance the voice of Aboriginal people in decision-making and driving regional priorities and growth.

The announcement was made during national NAIDOC Week, the annual celebration of the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The new Aboriginal Regional Authority policy delivers on a State Government commitment to work more collaboratively with Aboriginal communities, and to strengthen the relationship between the government and all Aboriginal South Australians.



DEWNR's Fire management unit are responsible for undertaking prescribed burns in SA's parks and reserves for the protection of life, property and environmental assets. A burn is planned for three sites in the Yumbarra Conservation Park where recent wildfires had left untouched zones of fire dependant trees and shrubs.

In April this year, a 'ramble survey' was undertaken across the Park to assess the flora and fauna species in the area prior to undertaking a prescribed burn.

On considering the limited number of access roads through the park and the distance of the Park from Ceduna,

Large spinifex rings



it was decided to do the survey using a helicoptor to transport Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara's Leah Feuerherdt and vegetation expert Phil Barron (Barron Consulting) to, and across Yumbarra.

"Although Yumbarra Conservation Park (on the west coast of SA) is only about two hours drive north of Ceduna, using the helicopter to survey the site cut four days off the time it would have taken us to do the survey on the ground.

"The day was clear and unseasonably warm which gave us perfect visibility of the Mallee and Spinifex woodlands that stretched as far as the eye could see" said Leah.

Flying at 20-50m above ground level Leah and Phil were able to clearly identify different vegetation associations and species.

Yumbarra Rockhole



We didn't see much fauna, but then again the sound of the helicopter was probably enough to send them into hiding" said Leah.

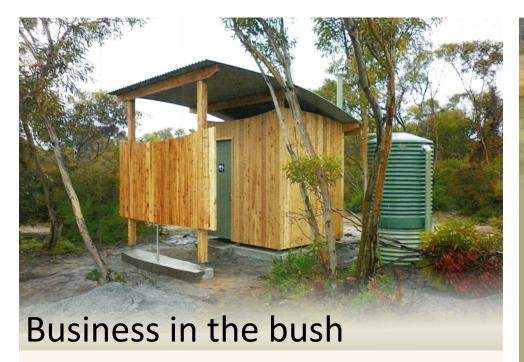
As spinifex dies off in the centre as it spreads outward the large Spinifex rings in some areas indicated that a fire had not gone through those locations for some time.

Fire is the trigger for many species to release their seeds and spurs regrowth. The survey determined that a number of controlled burns would benefit the area and reduce the chance of higher temperature wildfires occurring.

Healthy quandong trees growing on Park







The need for improved public infrastructure and park maintenance within co-managed parks of the Far West Coast Native Title area was raised at the November 2015 Yumbarra Co-management Board and Nullarbor Parks Advisory Committee meetings.

With toilet facilities identified as a priority, new units were purchased that would minimise the impact of increased visitation while also attracting more people to enjoy the Parks' unique environments.



Above: Wooden toilets for Googs Lake and Mexican Hat

Co-management meetings held earlier this year determined that the most appropriate locations to erect the new facilities would be those areas with the greatest visitation.

- Koonalda Homestead
- Googs Lake
- Mexican Hat

After gaining permission from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation Board to construct the installations at the 3 locations mentioned above excavation works were able to begin.

Excavations were undertaken by contractors and included the installation of .4 meter deep x 1.5 meter wide tank.

The works were completed over a 10 day block starting with Koonalda Homestead progressing to Mexican Hat and Scott's Beach and finishing at Googs Lake.

This undertaking exemplifies the South Australian (SA) Government's commitment to engaging community in decision making and to delivering resources that support SA tourism.

Metal toilet for Koonalda Homestead

Planned Burning...

Why it is so important

Of the 50 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases added to the atmosphere each year, about 2 billion tonnes (4%) come from wildfires.

Getting wildfire emissions under control will be a vital part of combating climate change. The occurrence of large destructive wildfires in fire-dependent ecosystems can be significantly reduced through carefully planned fire management practices.

Well considered fire management can reduce wildfire emissions by as much as a third, and improve biodiversity and biosequestration.

In Australia, research has shown that burning early in the dry season when there is less undergrowth rather than after rains, can reduce emissions by as much as half. This is in line with Indigenous fire practices.

Through the Australian government's Emissions Reduction Fund, Australia is leading the world in reintroducing traditional fire practices.

Much of the fire-dependent regions are Indigenous-owned or have significant Indigenous involvement.

Previous fire management projects have created jobs in remote and vulnerable communities, improved

biodiversity, reinvigorated Indigenous culture and improved food security and better health outcomes.



Sam Johnston, Senior Research Fellow, United Nations University: The Conversation



Marine Debris Arts Program, School-based Trainee and Beach Clean-ups

One of the ways Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara (NR AW) and the AW NRM Board seek to maximise the impacts of their programs, and cost effectiveness, is to develop projects which complement each other.

The integration of two projects into the highly successful Marine Debris Art Program in 2014, exemplifies what can be achieved through careful planning. This program supported West Coast Aboriginal artists to take part in a two-week workshop to create sculptures using marine debris collected during AW NRM beach surveys and clean-ups.

The artists involved in this program, based at the Ceduna Arts Centre. produced Jidirah the whale (see pages 8-9, Jidirah meets Monaco's Prince Albert), along with numerous other amazing sculptural pieces. The key driver behind this program was to raise awareness about the destructive impact that marine debris has on marine life.

The collection of raw materials (marine debris) undertaken by Aboriginal Rangers and women from the Yalata Women's Centre for the art works was funded by an Australian Government grant: Conserving Alinytjara Wilu<u>r</u>ara's coastline through enhanced Indigenous capacity.

2016

Successful integration of three AW projects

This year, the scope of integrated projects was expanded to include skill development of NR AW's School-based Trainee, Latisha Richards.

With support from AW's Community Engagement Manager Bruce Macpherson, and staff from the Ceduna Natural Resources Centre, Latisha was given responsiblity for managing the Beach Clean-up project and delivery of the Marine Debris Art Program.







Planning the day with co-workers: Taylor Bowden, Latisha Richards, Nathan Williams and Jamal LeBois

Work kicked off in May with teams scanning the beaches at number of locations between Mexican Hat and Head of Bight.

"I was really happy to see that less marine debris was found on our beaches than in previous years. Pretty hopeful, but maybe the message is beginning to get through" said Latisha.

To ensure that there would be enough materials for the artists to work with, NR AW contracted Yalata Youth Group to carry out several more Beach Cleanups in areas previously missed.

Artists from GhostNets have inspired and supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists Australia wide in creating eye-catching marine sculptures from marine debris.

Keeping beaches free of man-made material, with a little help from Yalata Youth Group members

The GhostNets artists contracted by NR AW to facilitate the Ceduna Marine Debris Art workshops, will be staying at Ceduna's Natural Resources Centre for the two-week duration of the program's delivery.

Tjutjana (Ceduna) Arts will manage the production side of the enterprise and host the workshops.

A number of community meetings have already been held at Tjutjana Arts with possible themes for the workshop sparking lively discussion.

As a budding artist herself, Latisha is keen to see the next phase underway.

"I'm looking forward to supporting and working with the artists and excited to see what amazing sculptures we can come up with" she said.



AW Trainee Latisha Richards at Mexican Hat with her proud mum (and co-worker) Amanda Richards



Jamal LeBois collecting marine debris



Above: Yalata lads pack up another load of debris







Codee Spitzkowsky

My name is Codee and I've just started as the Alinytjara Wilurara Project Officer in Ceduna.

I spent the first few years of my life living in the remote Aboriginal community of Angatja in the Anangu Pitjantjara region. My family later moved to our current home on 9,500 acres of coastal property just south of Penong.

On deciding a university degree wasn't for me, I worked in Qld for a while before moving back to the West Coast to work with Iluka in their exploration department.

After completing a Commercial Diver traineeship I worked for 3 years all around WA. A couple of highlights include installing the world's first wave powered energy generator off Garden Island Naval Base and completing cyclone mooring inspections on the Kimberly's Buccaneer Archipelago.

After an injury that stopped me from diving, I gained a position with SANTOS as Cultural Heritage Field Supervisor.

Over the next 3 years I developed amazing friendships and trust with various Traditional Owner groups working with them in the field to identify Cultural Significance sites.

Wanting to escape the FIFO lifestyle and contribute to the local community that had given me so many opportunities over the years, I was very happy to have won this position.

I'm really enjoying my new role and genuinely look forward to seeing what skills and experience I can bring to what promises to be a very enjoyable work environment.

Brett Backhouse

I'm an Adelaide boy and have been involved with animals and conservation for the past 16 years, starting out as a bird keeper with the Adelaide Zoo.

Working there ignited a passion for wildlife conservation, not only of native birds, but also of native mammals and reptiles and the issues they have common in relation to introduced pest, weeds and landscape changes.

During my time at the zoo, I spent 12 months overseas working on conservation projects based in New Zealand, Ecuador, Brazil and Peru, including a five week stint camping in the Amazon.

Back in SA I was involved in feral animal control in the northern Flinders as part of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby recovery program.

After 12 years at the zoo I became a Senior Ecologist with EBS Ecology. Although I worked primarily as an Ornithologist, I was also involved in terrestrial fauna and flora and took part in many surveys across the state, including in Yellabinna.

This experience gave me extensive skills in fauna monitoring, identification and handling which I'm happy to pass on to others.

I'm really looking forward to developing strong relationships with the people living in the AW region and to expanding my understanding of the area's ecology with their help.



Leah Feuerherdt

All at AW are sad to say goodbye to Leah, whose contribution during her time with us was outstanding.

Her enthusiastic, pragmatic approach was an essential ingredient in the successful development of AW's new business planning methodology, the long term benefits of which are continuing to emerge.

Her work on the *Healthy Country* Business Plan agenda significantly contributed to the development of a Program Tracker. The "Tracker" is proving to be an invaluable tool that allows us to track project budget and activity progress from the same reference point as well as supports advanced reporting.

Leah also extended the Healthy Country Planning process, which led to AW securing contracts with Antakirinja Mantuntjara Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation to develop a works program for Tallaringa HCP initially focussing on Buffel grass control.

All of these achievements leave AW with a lasting legacy helping us to become a highly accountable organisation successfully undertaking, and reporting on, a myriad of NRM projects.

Thank you Leah, we're hoping that your enthusiasm for the people and the country of our region will give us another opportunity to work with you again in the future.





The AW NRM Region bids a very fond farewell to Nathan Williams, who has worked from the Ceduna Office for the past 4 years as Landcare Facilitator/Project Officer. Nathan has had a significant and deep impact on the work of Natural Resources AW and has been a key person in engaging communities in the Region; particularly encouraging the young men from Yalata and Oak Valley communities to become active in NRM activities. Nathan has been in his element in the region's Communities and loved to share his knowledge and skills with others. He has been a guiet achiever within the organisation, with a formidable knowledge of flora and fauna, traditional skills, Culture and the Ukulele!

He took great delight in finding the connections between people taking great delight in introducing Friends of the Great Victoria Desert to the young workers from Oak Valley; building bridges by comparing traditional tracking techniques with the ARC Pad Tracking systems and finding them complementary. That passion for Connecting Country, Culture and People typified his approach to his work - the essence of NRM.



Nathan is an initiated Western Arrernte man from Hermannsburg, outside Alice Springs. As a member of the famous Williams family, it is in his genes to be a worker and a musician and he lives up to both those traditions. Inevitably, the pull of family has finally drawn him home. Proudly, he is returning to take up the role of Work Supervisor with MacDonnell Shire Council. He takes with him a Certificate 3 in Conservation and Land Management and an impressive set of land management skills gained from his work with the fabulous AW team. It is an immense achievement for Nathan, a source of great pride for his family, and gratifying for the AW NRM Region that he is the

first Aboriginal man to be appointed as Works Supervisor in that region.

Nathan's presence on the Far West Coast will be greatly missed.

His enthusiasm for his work has been both infectious and inspirational.

All the best Nathan















Parry Agius Presiding Member

AW NRM Board

Serving the

PEOPLE, COUNTRY, WATER of the Alinytjara Wilurara Region

Mima Smart Board Member, Yalata Mick Hawnoo



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