

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation

Final Report – August 2022



Northern Territory Government Local Decision Making

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Cover images: (clockwise from top left) Sea view from Alyangula, Groote Eylandt; Katherine Gorge, Nitmiluk National Park; view over Alice Springs; Ngukurr Community.

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This document may contain the names and/or images of Aboriginal people who have since passed away.

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Abbreviations

AHAC	Anindilyakwa Housing Association Corporation
ALC	Anindilyakwa Land Council
CDP	Community Development Program
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CJG	Community Justice Group
DCMC	Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet
DIPL	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics
DLGHCD	Department of Local Government Housing and Community Development
DTFHC	Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities
EARC	East Arnhem Regional Council
GEBIE	Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Enterprises
GEBIPCAC	Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Primary College Aboriginal Corporation
GHAC	Groote Holdings Aboriginal Corporation
JAAC	Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation
LDM	Local Decision Making
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAP	Multi-Agency Partnership Agreement
MES	Municipal and Essential Services
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Association
NLC	Northern Land Council
NTG	Northern Territory Government
R&M	Repairs and Maintenance
RATE	Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education
SPWBK	Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti
TCAC	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation
TCRH	Tangentyere Council Research HUB
WHASAC	Warnumamalya Health Services Aboriginal Corporation
YMDAC	Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation

Key Insights

Overall Insights

- LDM is working well. Overall, from people and groups directly involved in LDM, there was considerable enthusiasm for the policy and the new relationships and opportunities it has created.
- Across all LDM sites, local decision making was not seen as a new local phenomenon, but a new initiative by the government to take seriously working with existing traditional local decision making practices.
- The work of LDM is seen as effective to the extent through which it enables Aboriginal elders working in collaboration with government to reinforce ancestral networks of kin and places through which strong local Aboriginal lives can flourish.
- Two linking phenomena were considered as significant: the local Indigenous umbrella organisation (answerable to the elders), and active local networks of public servants (answerable to their governments). LDM allows them to work together productively (and often invisibly) to address the problems of the moment.
- LDM in each place was traced back to an originary story in which traditional governance and government governance began to be negotiated in the inauguration of contemporary local communities.
- In referring back to these originary stories, contemporary collaborations between community organisations and government, are recognised by local people as working through these quite specific historical visions, initiatives and networks.
- These stories are critical to understanding the networks and accountabilities through which local elders and public servants can and should work together productively into the future.

Policy Insights

- In each site, local organisations have a specific and critical role in mediating between community and the government. The properly negotiated representational arrangements of these organisations are seen as crucial for the ongoing viability of LDM activities. They must comprise the 'right' people.
- Significant effort is made on the part of local organisations to constitute themselves in ways that enable this brokering to take place in acceptable ways. This important ongoing work was thought by some local decision makers to be invisible or undervalued by government agencies who would benefit from better understanding of their make-up and practices.
- LDM is seen to have helped make visible to government workers a variety of gaps, issues and sites, that fail to get proper attention when government business is compartmentalised. LDM allows existing practices of local decision making to identify and address these issues and in so doing, these networks become more visible and effective.
- While government and non-government agencies tend to focus upon problems that need to be addressed, local decision makers on the ground focus more upon the networks of relationships and support which need to be activated and supported to mitigate the problems.
- There were key government areas (e.g around contracting and procurement) where immediate positive shifts have been made to transition services delivery to local management and control. In other areas, notably Education, more significant nurturing of changes in government culture are required if trust in collaboration and sustainable transitions are to be made, and new generations are to grow up strong in ancestral land and law.
- There are some people and groups who are not directly included in LDM activities who feel marginalised by the priorities and structure of organisations that LDM supports.

Monitoring & Evaluation Insights

- Monitoring and evaluation work is always already happening in communities as elders and leaders work to guide local practices in ways that will help bring about vibrant futures for young people.
- As such, monitoring and evaluation is also seen as an essential part of ongoing local decision making in collaboration with government staff, rather than as separate or removed from LDM activities. Monitoring and evaluation, like co-design and co-delivery entails sitting down with key people (elders, workers, organisation staff), listening to their stories, reflecting upon their meanings, operationalising their insights and helping the stories circulate.
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous people contributed to the M&E research in this project in quite different ways:
 - In each place, Aboriginal participants took the opportunity of the Ground Up LDM M&E research to share 'good stories' of local decision making which revealed key imperatives of traditional and local leadership, and enlarged upon the originary stories, while celebrating good practices of collaboration with government.
 - Non-Indigenous people more often took the opportunity of the Ground Up LDM M&E research to emphasise key elements of agreements or policy practices which were not working or require further support.
- In places where it was possible to engage local researchers to guide the M&E research, these researcher-consultants provided crucial knowledge and governance brokerage work under the authority of relevant elders.
- The stories told by elders often work to 'make evident' ways in which they understand value and are seeking to guide the emergence of local outcomes and healthy community. Attending to these stories offers ways of agreeing upon and delivering what is important to grow and celebrate. This ground up method is seen as more effective than imposing external M&E assessment frameworks.

Executive Summary

In 2021, the Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet (DCMC), Northern Territory Government, engaged the Ground Up team at the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University to initiate Monitoring and Evaluation research in sites with active Local Decision Making agreements – Ngukurr, Alice Springs Town Camps, Jawoyn Region, the Groote Archipelago and Kalkaringi.

The NTG Local Decision Making policy came into effect following its announcement by the Chief Minister Michael Gunner in the Jabiru Statement in August 2018. Central to the policy is the recognition that effective achievement of good outcomes for Aboriginal people is through self-determination and decision making that is locally based. To date nine LDM agreements have been signed with local groups or organisations, six of which are under implementation.

This Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) project was initiated 3 years into the life of the NTG Local Decision Making Policy, at the point when many of the places with agreement were entering their second agreement period, and after they had moved beyond initial stages of establishment. The Ground Up research team has long-term experience working under local elder authority and with local researchers to develop processes of M&E. In all sites we negotiated local M&E processes with local elders or organisations and engaged local researchers where this was possible and considered appropriate by local Aboriginal organisations.

The practice of monitoring and evaluating was not seen by local elders as a process that is separate to LDM, but an inherent part of collaboration with government and other external organisations. In almost all places there was a strong commitment by local Aboriginal elders and LDM leaders to tell stories revealing imperatives of good collaboration and LDM strategy so as to model good practice which can be visible to others and support the strengthening of LDM from the grass roots.

In **Ngukurr** and the **Alice Springs Town Camps**, research was directed by local researchers working under the guidance of their senior authorities. In Ngukurr this work was carried out by

a small team of local researchers working with CDU and under the guidance and authority of the Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation (YMDAC). The research focussed on engaging senior elders in Ngukurr both within and outside of the YMDAC which is the local LDM signatory organisation. In the Alice Springs Town Camps, the research was also carried out by a small team of researchers working with CDU and under the guidance of the Tangentyere Council LDM sub-committee. Here research was focussed on engaging key Town Camp presidents and others who have been actively involved in all LDM activities.

In the **Jawoyn Region** and the **Groote Archipelago** research was guided by senior organisation staff and carried out by CDU. In the Jawoyn Region, this involved interviews with Jawoyn Association and Nitmiluk Tours board members as well as senior members of the Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup. In the Groote Archipelago interviews were carried out with representatives from current LDM Implementation areas and facilitated by the ALC, as the LDM signatory organisation.

In **Kalkaringi** a different approach was proposed. Here the local LDM signatory organisation, the Gurindji Association Aboriginal Corporation sought to monitor and evaluate their LDM activities through the creation of a 'Gurindji Happiness Index'. This index would operate under community control and allow local data collection and analysis reviewing whether LDM is contributing to growing levels of happiness amongst Gurindji people. Work around a happiness index tool is ongoing within the Northern Institute at CDU, however this work is being pursued separately to the other Ground Up M&E carried out to date and does not appear in this report.



LDM and the flourishing of Aboriginal people-places

A primary and consistent response emerging across all LDM sites, was that local decision making was not a new phenomenon, but a new initiative by the government to take seriously local and traditional practices for growing up healthy new generations of young people on country. As such, the appropriate position of the public servant was most often seen to be as a supporter of these already active processes, working collaboratively at the invitation of local people already involved in their networks of kin to sustain their ancestral places and cultures.

In each place, there were also established and well-remembered practices for engaging with government, that were seen as having come and gone over the years. The particular histories of these engagements coloured and informed contemporary commitments to LDM and ways of working with government staff and agencies in creating better futures for Aboriginal people.

Successful LDM practice was most often measured not in numbers of services transitioned or jobs created, but in flourishing relationships and ways of working with government that support and enhance the mobilisation of local governance through relations of kin and places in dealing with particular local issues or problems of the moment.

It's when these networks of kin and governance are recognised as already strong, that existing processes that have always already been present for growing up young people, healing disputes, caring for country, managing resources and connecting with others, are able to flourish and develop alternate solutions to problems than might otherwise be available (e.g. in managing housing in ways that are responsive to local need and family relationships, connecting gaps in night patrol services, generating workforce development options so young people can work on their grandfather's country, managing civil works so old people can access important hunting areas, designing school curricula which take seriously local languages and knowledge).

Through local strategies being developed in each LDM site, ways of repositioning and rearranging previous relations between local groups and the government are being negotiated. It is the capacity to engage fully and meaningfully in these negotiations, coming from a foundation of kinship and country, that is seen as so promising, and which is wholeheartedly appreciated, by so many LDM participants and groups.

Site specific networks of LDM practice

Emerging in the stories shared through the Ground Up M&E research were particular strategies through which the elders and leaders in each place with an LDM agreement were remembering their past engagements with government staff and policy arrangements, and how they were now seeking to re-make these relationships with greater control over their places, their futures, and ways in which they can support emerging generations through LDM.

In Ngukurr, in remembering past agreements between clans in moving to the Roper River mission, it has been seen as important to keep in view the governance arrangements between these 7 local clans in now also engaging with government through LDM. There has been the establishment of a local Governance Group and community governance model helping to keep these inter-clan relationships visible and supporting the ability for these groups to continually renegotiate their governance in the face of new services or initiatives to be delivered. There remains hesitancy around LDM from a number of senior elders and community members, and it is in the continual revisiting of clan relationships in contemporary situations that LDM is seen as gradually gathering trust and capability supporting new kinds of practice better aligned with local needs and understandings.

In the Alice Springs Town Camps, elders and local leaders involved in LDM have clear memories of the way in which housing and associated services had previously been removed from their control, and the importance of having an organisation like Tangentyere to negotiate and advocate on behalf of Town Campers in engaging with government. In working with and through LDM in recovering control and autonomy over housing services and working towards a broader vision of Town Camp well-being, it is important here that LDM activities be firmly driven by Tangentyere. In this way, systems of safety which have protected the Town Camps against the vicissitudes of government practice in the past may be upheld, while Town Camp leaders work from a position of strength in envisioning and negotiating ways forward.

In the Jawoyn Region, the success of the Jawoyn land claims in 1989 heralded a new working relationship with government that was predicated on an active recognition by government of



the sovereign ownership of Jawoyn people over their lands. In this site, current LDM activities are seen as a continuation of this existing working relationship in which Jawoyn people are pleased to work with others in caring for and sharing their land. However, in previous policy regimes in collaborating with government, Jawoyn have also needed to collaborate with the prevailing government apparatus (such as the Shire Council). Now through LDM, Jawoyn see themselves as free to begin working to reposition the focus of their activities, no longer having to centre on Katherine as a hub of enterprise development, and instead focus on all dispersed Jawoyn communities, and how they can be better serviced, supported and connected.

In the Groote Archipelago, there is a strong allegiance to the forms of working relationship that Anindilyakwa people had with Macassan traders, well before their engagement with missions or the government. It is these forms of collaborative enterprise that have been the focus of Anindilyakwa leaders as they have sought to shape new and vibrant futures for emerging generations. Here, LDM activities with government are pursued alongside partnerships with industry and forms of private investment, and as such it is the outcomes that are able to be achieved by both government playing their part as a crucial enabler, and industry offering large scale investments which will support the nurturing of Anindilyakwa futures on the archipelago.

In the accounts shared through the Ground Up LDM research, it is these particular instances, or flavours, of LDM which have been expressed clearly, and shown to be of significance, in the ways in which local people and organisations work with government. In centring relationship, each of these particular ways of pursuing LDM comes from an empowered position and involve collaboration with government. It is in continuing to support and enhance these particular relationships with government, that flourishing local communities are likely to emerge.

Working through the LDM principles

Within the NT government there is a set of 5 LDM principles that are intended to guide the practice of government agencies and other involved organisations working on the ground with Aboriginal people and groups – ‘self-determination, place-based, flexible, co-design, community control’.

In the stories shared by elders and local LDM leaders, there was strong appreciation for new strategies within government enabling locally led services delivery and economy to become visible or emerge on the ground. There was also an appreciation for considerable good will being expressed by most NT government workers in pursuing LDM aims, and in particular NT government regional staff, even while there remained certain bureaucratic habits and hurdles which presented challenges to the ways of working most valued amongst local Aboriginal people and organisations.

Across all sites there were certain areas of ‘low hanging fruit’ where opportunities for government flexibility have meshed well with local needs allowing significant effects to be felt quickly. The most prominent of these areas was housing, and the shift of contracts around tenancy management (DTFHC) and

Repairs and Maintenance (DIPL). In all places, the management of different aspects of public housing has in the past caused difficulties for local people trying to maintain health, safety and family and cultural cohesion. Through processes of procurement through select tender enabled by LDM, and support for growth for Aboriginal organisations, these services are in the process of transitioning at all LDM sites and beneficial effects are being celebrated on the ground. Continued work generating contracting environments suitable for local organisations, and the ways in which they wish to engage contracts around housing, construction, civil works and other areas should continue to be supported both through LDM and the new NT Aboriginal Procurement Policy.

A common area of challenge emerging across sites has been around negotiating new relationships with Regional Councils. The impact of the Shire Councils has been strongly felt in all communities and there is both a memory of the local control afforded by Community Councils when they were active, as well as lived experience of the problems created in remote communities and homelands when all servicing is focussed around regional hubs. Local people working through LDM in each place, have in different ways sought to recover a sense of autonomy from the Regional Councils, and sought to establish new patterns of service delivery which do not disadvantage remote areas. While involving difficult discussions and negotiations, in most places there were good outcomes beginning to emerge out of a significant period of tension and transition, for example in Ngukurr where breakdowns in communication and tensions around asset management are spoken about having been replaced by productive communication, and in the Groote Archipelago, where moves to alter the Local Government Act are supporting their strong commitment to devolving from the east Arnhem Shire and establishing a new Local Council.

Alongside these challenging, but productive areas of engagement, there were also stories shared of areas where more significant cultural change is seen as needed to help activate the possibility of respectful and ongoing local decision making. In all places, there was a clear emphasis on the importance of local language and culture in schools if young people are to be raised to be ‘who they are’ and other systemic issues of well-being, cultural justice and care for places and culture are to be addressed. While there are a few flagship independent schools who are supporting alternate education practices in the NT, the widespread erosion of institutional capacities for schools to offer bilingual education, and culturally safe spaces for the teaching and sharing of language and culture, was frequently discussed. There was a widespread lack of faith in local schools as suitable sites supporting the vision and principles of LDM, pointing for the need to nurture new cultures of collaboration and support around education services delivery, infrastructure management and governance of schooling in communities.

In all places, there were continuing efforts being made around the creation of alternative processes for community justice, with integrated processes of policing and community justice being seen as integral to supporting young people and others to

spend more time with kin on-country and the potential for finding new solutions to previously intractable problems in including country and collective practices for knowing kin, leadership and responsibility in how community is built.

In some places, there was a particular focus on the role that non-government services providers play in local ecologies of governance and care. These organisations are often not directly party to LDM agreements but are part of the complex ecologies of service delivery and care through which young people and their places are nurtured. Emerging around these discussions in some instances, are also clear specifications around the particular design of services delivery, and ways of focussing on strengthening networks of local practice as an alternative to the services delivery models often being enacted by government or other organisations. Where there are connected partnerships around services delivery there is further scope for focussing on how services can be continually redesigned to be able to uphold local authority structures and ways of caring for people and next generations which do not perpetuate cultures of deficit, or deficit based welfare economies.



Structure of this report

In the opening section of this report, we have offered key insights arising from the research and an executive summary detailing overall research findings from across all LDM sites. These have been drawn from across all LDM M&E sites, and outline local understandings and imperatives guiding good LDM practice.

In the sections that follow, we provide detailed community Ground UP M&E reports for – Ngukurr, Alice Springs Town Camps, Jawoyn Region and the Groote Archipelago. These reports detail the processes through which LDM has been engaged by local leaders and organisations, the processes and strategies for engagement around LDM prioritised by these groups, and case studies and assessments of LDM initiatives and the enactment of NTG LDM principles in each place. Direct quotes from local decision makers are in italics. All community reports have been returned to local organisations and

participants involved in the research for feedback. The reports were finalised after receiving their final approval.

The final sections provide details of the Ground Up M&E approach for LDM that has become significant in carrying out this project. This approach embeds a 3-stage logic in which the local configurations and understandings of LDM that are at work in each place, and ground ongoing practices of M&E supporting iterative learning and better strategies for collaborative design, delivery and evaluation with government and other external organisations engaging in LDM work. Details of this schema are provided, along with available tools for research inquiry and engaging local M&E researchers.

This report concludes with recommendations for public servants. Summaries of LDM agreements and achievements are provided for each site in the appendix.



NTG Local Decision Making

Ngukurr Community Report

**Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation
August 2022**



Research facilitated by:

Ian Gumbula, Mercy Gumbula, Marlene Andrews and Sharona Rogers



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Key Insights

- At Ngukurr, Local Decision Making (LDM) is an invitation from the community for government staff to work with, and support, them.
- LDM is seen as an opportunity for elders to demonstrate their leadership. When they show themselves to be builders of the community this gives life to young people and a path for them to follow.
- The criteria for success of LDM at Ngukurr are strong clan leaders and families. The reason to work through 'organisations' is because they are more visible to governments, and help focus government efforts towards these more fundamental criteria.
- The process of working on LDM agreements at Ngukurr has required revisiting traditional practices of governance in negotiating a new local agreement with government.
- Local Decision Making is through the Yugul Mangi Aboriginal Corporation (YMDAC) Local Decision Making Board. It draws on the Chair, Deputy Chair, Directors, YMDAC Executive Management as well as Cultural Governance Team and Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti (SPWBK). This integrated structure provides a good foundation for programs and services to be properly coordinated and mutually reinforcing.
- Sometimes when entering into the services people still feel 'controlled' because of the strict rules and policies that need to be followed, which pull away from how to grow healthy people and community.
- Proper services delivery design requires appropriate local understandings of both 'the service' and 'the people' that the service is for.
- LDM provides the opportunity for YMDAC to be strengthened through the governance group so it can become visible within Ngukurr, and to government and other organisations.
- The strength of LDM rests on continual support for culture. If this doesn't continue, there is danger both for LDM and for local people and their law.
- There is a role for the cultural governance group working with local leaders to provide M&E feedback to government through the local decision making group. They are the right people to do research and evaluation supporting government and supporting LDM.

What we did

In Ngukurr, the CDU Ground Up team held initial conversations with the YMDAC Chairman Bobby Nunggumarjbarr and YMDAC CEO, who provided initial guidance. Authorisation for the project was provided by YMDAC Chairman Bobby Nunggumarjbarr and YMDAC Deputy Chair Daphne Daniels.

The research was led by experienced local researcher Ian Gumbula. It involved collaborative work between Ian as a senior advisor and researcher, Marlene Andrews as a researcher, and Marlene's daughter Sharona Rogers as a research mentoree. This team was supported on the ground in Ngukurr and Darwin by the CDU researcher.

It was agreed amongst the local research team, that the research should focus on hearing the voices of community leaders guiding LDM. Ian and Marlene facilitated 6 face-to-face discussions with elders and Yugul Mangi board members working with the CDU researcher in Ngukurr between 12-17 Sept 2021. These leaders were visited in their home or workplace, and Sharona took photos and videos. Ian also facilitated zoom meetings with two other key leaders and the CDU researcher.

A further round of interviews was conducted in mid-December 2021. These were carried out by Ian Gumbula working independently in Ngukurr. Ian spoke with 9 elders, YMDAC board members and community members, and focussed on a set of 5 interview questions. He made audio recordings of each of these conversations and shared them with the CDU researcher.

Ian worked with the CDU researcher to provide interpretations of the interview data and worked with Mercy Gumbula, another experienced researcher, to review all aspects of the report and make sure it aligned with local understandings. The report was finalised after Ian shared it with the Yugul Mangi Chair, Deputy Chair and other Ngukurr elders for their final approval, and after the CDU team received approval from the Yugul Mangi CEO.



Senior researcher Ian Gumbula speaking with Craig Rogers, Yugul Mangi board member.

LDM in Ngukurr

The community of Ngukurr was originally established as a mission station in 1908, and so has experienced a long history of colonisation and the need for various clan and language groups to co-exist. When talking about Local Decision Making, the elders often refer back to the origin stories of the community: remembering the time when traditional clan and land ownership relations were acknowledged in making an agreement about new ways of living together (as a community) and brokering safer ways of living with the Australian state (see the local leaders' statements below).

Three specific moments of agreement making were seen as important to the ongoing life of Ngukurr – the original agreement of the land in which people are constituted as clan and kin relations; the subsequent agreement that was made as different clans came together to live in the Roper River Mission (now Ngukurr); and now the agreement currently being made and ongoingly reviewed with the NT Government. These agreements take different forms, and work with different governmentalities – i.e., different kinds of relationship between people, places and government. The previous contract made between clan groups was not written down, nor was government explicitly a party to the agreement.

Current LDM agreements made with the NT government are seen as another iteration in this history of agreement making in Ngukurr. As such, they are a continuation of the practices through which traditional governance seeks to strengthen and maintain itself through good and respectful ways of working closely with government.

In reflecting on the LDM agreement and its associated activities, many local leaders saw the creation of a local Aboriginal organisation as a way to become visible to government, and to have some control over ways in which government funding and support could be channelled in productive ways on the ground. The functioning of this group is therefore to maintain appropriate relations between local clan estates through traditional

governance arrangements, while also being able to connect well enough to government agencies and western governance practices.

The Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation (YMDAC) was established in 2008. It had been running for 10 years when its board decided to initiate an LDM agreement with the NT government. YMDAC is guided by a board of 14 directors who represent the 7 local clan groups. The Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti (SPWBK) is a subcommittee appointed by the YMDAC. The committee consults broadly and provides recommendations to the YMDAC Local Decision Making Board. This is a valuable consultation and decision making mechanism that informs strong locally based decisions on foundations of local knowledge and needs.

The YMDAC supports, and is guided by, a Cultural Governance Group. The Cultural Governance group have generated a 'clan based management model' which represents 7 clans (Ngalakan, Mara, Alawa, Wandarrang, Nunggubuyu, Ngandi and Ritharrngu), 4 semi moieties (Budal, Gual, Mirrunggun and Mambali), 2 moieties (Yirritja and Dhuwa) and 3 cultural positions (Minggirringi, Jungayi and Dalyan). The work of shaping appropriate processes for clan governance to guide YMDAC and LDM is ongoing, and is seen as vital to the respectful and sustainable development of businesses, services and organisations.



Researcher Marlene Andrews (left) and research mentoree Sharona Rogers (right) speaking with Kevin Rogers, Wuyagiba Study Hub Chairman.

The YMDAC would like to work closely with the Millwarrrarra Aboriginal Corporation, which is coordinated by the Traditional Owner group.

YMDAC have signed two NTG LDM Multi-Agency Partnership agreements:

- 28 May 2018 – Multi-Agency Partnership Agreement and Implementation Plan
- 25 August 2021 – YMDAC LDM Implementation Plan

The first of these agreements was designed as a collaboration between YMDAC and staff from DCMC and facilitated by consultants. It was the first of its kind to be signed in the NT. The stated aim of this agreement was to:

“create a future where culture and values connecting Yugul Mangi people to Country are sustained and celebrated, and where children and grandchildren have much improved opportunity for their health, well-being and prosperity ”

The implementation plan of this agreement began with the existing capacity and strengths of YMDAC, and focussed on three socio economic priorities: business development and contracting, local jobs and training and community-based service delivery. As well as three strategic enablers: capacity building, MAP plan implementation and resourcing, effective communication and engagement.

The second agreement refined these priorities to be in line with how the YMDAC board wanted to express their vision, and now works with the focus areas of: Cultural Strength & Respect,

Governance & Capacity, Community Wellbeing, Economic Empowerment and Local Jobs for Local People.

There are a number of prominent projects where the careful work of connecting to traditional law and governance, the Yugul Mangi Development Corporation (YMDC) and government departments is being worked through. These include the police precinct and cultural justice area (working waitbala and blekbala law), ongoing road maintenance and other construction contracts, CDP and youth diversion. It's in these and other areas that the visible effects of LDM can be seen by the broader community, and where local leaders hope important outcomes for emerging generations of healthy young people will be felt.

Local Evaluative Responses

In Ngukurr, research took the form of unstructured or semi-structured discussions with elders, Yugul Mangi board members and community members. It was guided by local leaders and their knowledge of their place. Ian worked with CDU to show this story so it can be visible to government staff. They shared their experiences of being involved in the LDM process, outcomes arising and what good local decision making means to them. The local researchers have endorsed these findings and shared them with key elders.

Services delivery design

Prior to LDM, work was already happening through Stronger Communities for Children. But when the LDM policy arrived it helped to show other areas that could be dealt with and connected in. Now through LDM, it's possible to begin focusing on quality services design and delivery. This allows us to follow the voices of previous leaders and helps their vision to become real.

“We have been working through Stronger Communities for Children for 14 years, building capacity and inspiring young people. Already had community people as leading voices for the people. That helped us with the cultural governance and governance mapping for Ngukurr. Trying to get that structure into shape, and balancing both ways.

“We're following our past and present leader in their vision, and now focus on quality service delivery and development. We're watching and listening to their song, dreams, visions, and now placing into services delivery. Now we have to be in the middle of navigating this.

This means focusing on changing ways of designing programs and services so they may be more suitable for people in Ngukurr and aligned with ways that young people need to be supported to grow up strong in their foundations.

“When going from the ground, in homelands and in services all elements are there together – language, artefacts, songs, land, ceremony. All these things are tied together and incorporated. The elders are the decision makers there. We need to get funding for these decision makers and services that are all tied in together, all incorporated.

“Often government are not acknowledging what young people are good on. They see the bad side but are things we are missing out from that person's way of doing things. Start from the way they are comfortable to do things. Instead of putting them somewhere else and trying to teach. Give time and space for person to stand in their own time.

Support for this includes having control over who gets funding for the services, and who is working in the community. It can also mean careful collaborative work, supporting Munanga (nonIndigenous people) who may not know the correct way to go if they don't have the right guidance (see the example of the social worker, case study 2).

Integrated local services

With the establishment of the Yugul Mangi office and the governance group it is becoming easier to coordinate social programs in ways which make sense with clan governance and ceremonies, and making visible kinship networks through which children, people with mental health problems and others can be cared for. It also makes more visible the gaps where we have no control.

“When we saw the gaps on the practical side of things in management, we've been working with the government about our needs and systems.

“We are realising what we don't have any more – like good education – and working on this. Back in the mission times we were independent and had good education. We need to take back control over who comes in and what services are happening.

“Housing, employment and youth diversion are all able to come in line with the place and the well-being of people. Integrated, and not having 5 different organisations all duplicating the same services.

“Youth program and family supports program provides social supports through the social worker who can link in through the youth program and with other people doing different things – this happens under the supervision of the governance group that advises and guides.

“Need to make the peacemaking stronger – Watjarr' and Gundul. Mediating so there is not just one judge, everybody is judging, and we are not just blaming one person we are blaming each other. That is a strong foundation to be accepted.

LDM will never completely resolve the tensions between cultural and organisational practices

There have always been traditional ways of making decisions and doing it through the right cultural way. But you need to know what you are doing. You need specialist skills in ceremony, dancing and connecting to land. Now this strength is important when working with government.

“I know both sides of the law the whitefella law and the cultural law. I work side-by-side with them. They are in the back of my mind all the time; the law is already there. The cultural law is supporting me, and that's how I operate myself.

“Can I handle cultural way or government way and how to marry those? If don't do it right, can be a wrong way marriage, so have to be careful. Result would be an unhappy marriage, unhappy decision. And these things are affecting many, not just a few.

It's important with LDM to be cautious

This is because it's easy to be distracted from what is the right way to do things, and all activities need to be properly mediated through the local leaders and then rules of waitbala governance.

“If local decision making is to be done effectively, we have to be careful not to be overwhelmed by too many outside demands and too ambitious plans and not enough recognition of what we have already got, what we are already able to do and the ability to join up all those things from our understanding and cultural way to employment.

“We have to go by the rules and follow the policy, if something goes wrong, we need to fix it up before moving to another step. Government plans its services according to their own logic.

Being 'in place' is critical to the success of LDM initiatives

Most often the government makes an agreement with an organisation, but organisations are just a way for groups and their places to become visible to government and focus funding to where it is important. The Land has law, and everything is lawful, you can't just do anything you want. If we put something there that is not rightful, we will harm ourselves, our programs, services, and funding.

“We are cultural people respect our mother in law and father in law and boundaries of where we can go. We're trying to get back and fix ourselves with our culture and custom. With community and with ceremony.

“We can solve problems in our own stompin' ground, instead of influences from the western society and America. Want our kids to stay in the community, deal with them cultural way (when they get in trouble with the police)

“When other departments and people come in and don't know do things, the community get angry, and they get sick.

“Everything is here, not like the long-grass people who have got lost, everything here country, culture. This is the best possible position to receive safety. Cousins might be strangers to each other in town, but the country tells them they're connected, and they can heal their fights.

Intergenerational LDM

We need to make sure adults and young people are in local decision making together. LDM can provide intergenerational learning and awareness when young people are involved and called in to be part of the local decision making work.

“Young people are learning new skills and how to work with elders. Some young people don't yet know the skills, and cultural knowledge the elders have.

“I'm trying to pass on my knowledge to the younger generation so they can carry on. Make sure they hold that strong law behind them all the time. Make sure they can stand up very, very strong for the benefit of their community.

But what is also happening here, is that young people have their own needs and understanding of what self-determination means. So, they also need to be able to share their understandings.

“Younger ones tell different story, they want a house of their own. Can see their needs, having house of their own isn't happening. They want to have a house away from their parents.

“The young people now days, they see the government not taking notice to what their needs are, they think alright this is what you're going to do to us, and they turn their backs on them and be quiet. They are not going to be wanting to say anything.

LDM and external services providers

It can be difficult to work with other organisations towards good LDM when they are focussed on building themselves but not the community. People working in these organisations are often not accountable to the community, but to their organisation. A key area where more of this needs to happen is around the school curriculum.

- “Need to address the school curriculum. Kriol is first together, need to keep supporting Kriol language program, if want local decision making, culture and language are first*
- “Stakeholders are sometimes too separate on their own work to collaborate together. Housing, employment, youth diversion – not connecting to community place. What is important is if we are actually benefitting. How to help with wellbeing of people. How to make a strong community.*
- “If things come through Yugul Mangi, they can stay connected to community. Programs for troubled youth, family violence or justice, there are projects there. Yugul Mangi didn't have capacities to support and help on family issues in the past. Would talk to people and identify area to get funding for. But now we have resources to help.*
- “What matters to me is to have a comfortable life with services and program. If enter into services still feel controlled. In signing, who is the person or group in community who is accountable to government and helping see if community is benefitting? They need person or group who is looking and seeing if its good, how it is running.*

- “For example, for housing, this has come into Yugul Mangi, but other people need to be guiding it through that cultural way. The cultural governance group can work with these issues and support the housing work. They need to be the people engaging the service and offering cultural support for that service (e.g., if that house or service gets cursed).*

The LDM agreement as an ongoing process

Having the written agreement with government is an important way to keep in focus what we are trying to achieve together and knowing who is responsible for what. But there is a danger in that agreement becoming too solid. This piece of work should be working closely with the blekbala system.

- “We need to get the agreements properly in place so that we can ensure a good partnership into the future with government. This includes working properly with the blekbala system which wasn't happening properly with the Shire, now it is done properly.*
- “This document needs to be modelled by leaders as a living document. The first agreement struggled because it was too detailed, and it focussed on tasks rather than visions. They needed to help us to review the plan, tell us what we are doing right and help us to collaborate This is our second one, this time we are seeing for ourselves from there to the future.*
- “Now make it work with collaborative approach, listen to others what we're trying to achieve. We use balance in cultural projects. For youth diversion, for all programs.*

Local Leaders' Statements



Walter Rogers discussing previous agreement making, when the seven clans came together to live on the mission.

“After the 1940 wet they made decision, come up here [to the mission]. Elders with the Traditional Owners of seven other tribes. The Traditional Owners made the decision verbally in church, the Roper River church. The decision was made that we would live together on this one country. We made this decision and agreed to it verbally. We didn't use pen and paper, was elders' agreement. We should stand by that agreement that was accepted by 7 tribes. Now we are making a new agreement with government, and this time it will be written down. Customary and tribal justice should be in that one, that agreement, with government. ”



Bobby Nunggumarjbarr on the process of developing an LDM agreement

“We were thinking about how we were going to make the government listen to us and how we were going to go forward. We were talking about it a lot, there was a lot of work through our journey to get it to this level. We done a lot of hard work, a lot of thinking, a lot of frustration around how we were going to put it together. We did that work with all the leaders and the 7 language groups and all the outside leaders that come together with us and we work side-by-side with them and make sure this document was strong to make better service for our community and children's children to leave behind. Because some of us won't be here any longer and we worked really hard on this document and I hope this document is now stronger to make sure we work well in the future. ”



Daphne Daniels on Local Decision Making as connecting local leadership and local services delivery outside of the governance structures of the Shire Council.

“I was a councillor for 4 years; I saw all the gaps. There was no voice, nothing was getting through. Local government was always focussing on the municipality, not on the social side, and people miss out. Promises were too empty, and everything went to Katherine. We were suffering, and they were busy building up Katherine, building up the centre. Now I can focus on quality service delivery and development. In part following what leaders said, leadership hope and directions. Watching and listening to their song, dreams and visions. Now placing this into services delivery, we have to be in the middle of navigating this. ”



Ian Gumbula on upholding traditional law and practices in making decisions

“We are together, people and land. We can't just do anything unless the law requires. It can't be us making something up about the land. The land already has law. Song has law, dances have law. Everything is lawful. All around life is bounded by the law. I can't attack that law, because it is the law. The law will let me know how to use it, how I want to live, protect my land, how we go back and do it in a way that is already there. Decision making is like this, and so if we put something in there that is not rightful it will harm ourselves, our program, services, funding. ”

Local Leaders' Statements



Owen Turner on LDM as elder leadership creating futures for young people

“Community want to see their ideas are real. If you go back to the olden days, our leaders were builders of the community, and this gives life to the community. Now we are building a new vision for young people who see they will be taking that role. We are not only building things for the community but building a way for young people to follow. Young people need to see we are leading them and giving them an opportunity to be involved.”



William Hall sharing words of caution about LDM with other elders and Traditional Owners

“If you’re going to put through your agreement with the government, it’s a dangerous thing to do to because the government might put padlock on it and then we can’t get anywhere. Going to be stuck in the middle. So be careful, think about it and talk about it, come back to the community and get more information. That’s my opinion, to the board and to the Chairman, for the business in the government. This is our land; this is our community. We’ll be living in it for the rest of our lives. And our children will take over when we go. I want to put that in black and white for everyone. Please listen. Be careful. Thank you.”



Craig Rogers on the importance of LDM in supporting community cultural justice

“When people come out of jail, they are still not free. Their life is all mix up, but goodness is inside. We need to help clear bad things for them. If they get 6 months, then 3 months in gaol and 3 months rehabilitation on country sounds like the best idea. Turn outstation into rehab, better for men, better for women. When meet this place here, stompin’ ground they will feel the path of their own community, own country is teaching them respect.”

Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1

‘Bringing up’: a local guide to the design of services delivery generating healthy people-places

Elders consistently reiterate local understandings of how services can follow traditional processes of development, where growing up the young people is a model for good governance and service delivery practice.

“ Start with tribal and clan relationship, then family, then the personal. This is not being taught in schools. First, we have that unique clan and kin identity. Have this before build the personal. Be proud of who we are. We are the oldest culture in the world.

Like learning to walk. Start from there, simplest way to develop. Look at law to build them up.

Take things slowly, things develop slowly. Then support will come from people themselves, once build them up, then they go. Have elders as guides for that and working with government.

That’s our major goal, building up from grass roots, making sure they can run businesses. Need qualification so they can come back and run businesses. Government policy of self-determination and we need support to reach goal of Aboriginal people to take control, build structure so people can take control of communities and going back to country to create tribal communities. ”

If the service is focussed on growing people’s right and connected identity through kin relations, then local control begins to emerge as people and country become strong in their connections and their authorities.

CASE STUDY 2

Transition plans: a proposal

Amidst the focus on development in LDM, elders also emphasised how equality between people, and in partnerships is to be brought about.

“ We are not yet focussed on what do we do to make us equal. How do we get there? Through transition plans. These are not yet in the agreement, but maybe the governance group decides this and reviews what is happening.

This local decision means for our local people to actually be in charge here. You are not under or above us – we are equal. If have munanga manager, also have local manager. Munanga CEO then local CEO. That way we can say how it’s going really well. ”

Such transition plans would initiate new roles in services where there is time for Munanga leaders to work with and support their local successors. This practice is already happening in reverse – a team of local cultural authorities have been working closely with the new Munanga social worker, mentoring her into right forms of local practice. The process is recognised locally as a great success.

CASE STUDY 3

Watjarr': standing in between both laws and justice, making it happen in the right way and in the right place

“ We want our kids to stay in the community and deal with them cultural way when they get in trouble with the police. ”

“ Got a new police building. That's really good for the police but can we be part of that justice? ”

Yugul Mangi signed a contract for the construction of a new police precinct in Ngukurr. The police station is integrated with the cells and court rooms, and local people won't have to be held in Katherine while waiting for outcomes of court matters. This is happening alongside the development of cultural justice and mediation practices. To make sure the new precinct is not just 'good for police' it will have to integrate with local cultural justice and support an alternative place for law and justice than just gaol.

“ The Yugul Mangi governance group helps us to put it [the mediation work] together, and to start making this work for our community. We're also working with magistrate and the NAAJA lawyers. They are giving the legal side. In our own country, own outstation, we see a place there where we can make something better for the next generation. ”

“ How will the police and cultural justice work together? The important thing is that we are controlling the decision making and the police are offering a service. With domestic violence, when someone has to go to prison or to hospital, how does the whole family heal? If we support people here in the right way, that healing will take place on country, not in the gaol, and family and partners will feel that too. Family and partners will be there, they will be listening to the elders and feeling something from the country. ”

What's working? What needs more work?

	What's working?	What needs more work?
Self determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated functioning of the Yugul Mangi board, and Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti and Cultural Governance Group sub-committees. Separation of aspects of local governance from the Regional Council. Increased number of s19 leases allowing more development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to acknowledge and strengthen elder/clan representation on the Yugul Mangi board and in local governance roles. Continued combined support through local leadership in re-designing and connecting services so they are aligned with local needs, and processes for growing strong new generations.
Place-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better visibility and foundational role of clan governance in decision making, development, services delivery and working with government. Building and allocating the YMDAC work offices. Building local police precinct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong and ongoing commitment to the development of local cultural justice initiatives. Continuing focus on language learning amongst services providers. Understandings of local language in governance and services delivery e.g., LDM agreement in Kriol.
Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining LDM agreements as living documents. Provision of select tenders and prioritisation of YMDAC in government contracting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to ongoing work areas like CDP, health services, youth diversion to local needs, including changing policy and legislation where necessary so services suit local way of life. Giving opportunity for young people to see and learn about tender processes and contracting.
Co-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for cultural leaders. Respected and productive relationships with NTG regional staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater attention to local/ cultural practices in the design of services. More working together on work options and transition plans (see case study 2) so can have local leadership and culturally appropriate services.
Community control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased scope for selection of correct local leaders and future leaders. Key leaders working as intermediaries between local Aboriginal corporations (YMDAC, Millwarrparra), Regional Council and government agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As LDM grows, key leaders work in Yugul Mangi to drive selection of other decision makers around services area, land agreements and all decision making.

Ngukurr Community Report Authorisation

A draft copy of this report was shared with the YMDAC Chairman and CEO by email, and changes that they suggested were incorporated. A draft of the report was also returned to all senior leaders who had participated in the Ground Up M&E research, and they were happy to authorise the version that appears here.



Senior researcher Ian Gumbula reviewing project report with (top left to right): Bobby Nunggumarjbarr, Daphne Daniels; (bottom left to right) Walter Rogers, William Hall, Craig Daniels and Owen Turner (not pictured).

NTG Local Decision Making

Alice Springs Town Camps Community Report

**Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation
August 2022**



Research facilitated by:

Vanessa Davis, Denise Foster, Elaine Williams and Jackie Foster,
Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation

Key Insights

- Modelling strong Town Camp leadership through LDM offers young people a path to follow and has an effect on strengthening the whole community.
- It is seen as important for LDM to allow local Aboriginal organisations working in good networks to be prioritised over services that have no authority or accountability.
- Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation is seen to play a crucial role mediating local decision making between the Town Camps and government.
- The role of government is seen as best focussed on responding to the needs of Town Campers through the leadership of Town Camp presidents, coordinated by the Tangentyere Council.
- The people in the Town Camps find strength in their connections to remote places but see their authority as grounded in the Town Camps and the senior people who have been living there their whole lives.
- Day-to-day lived experience is essential to healthy housing and Town Camp management, and an important basis for LDM.
- The LDM agreement and strategies help to keep government accountable and holds in place changes being made in Town Camps.
- Having good control of housing helps families, language and environments stay strong. A key part of this is enabling responsive municipal services, and control over housing allocation.
- The Town Camper Wellness Framework and agreed LDM schedules are crucial mechanisms supporting government staff to be guided by Town Camp priorities and to practice LDM.
- In supporting integrated connections between services, LDM will reduce the damaging effect of mainstream systems on people's lives.
- Speaking local languages is an important instrument of local decision making.

What we did

In the Alice Springs Town Camps, the Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation research was carried out under the guidance and authority of the Tangentyere Council LDM sub-committee.

The LDM sub-committee requested that the research be carried out under the advice of Tangentyere Council Research Hub, and the hub's senior researchers. They asked to approve a set of interview questions prior to any research occurring, and they provided a list of key leaders who would be best to approach for feedback on LDM activities.

The CDU Ground Up researcher then worked with a small team of local researchers that included two senior advisors from the Research Hub – [Vanessa Davis](#) and [Denise Foster](#) – who helped design the research questions and guide the research. Also two other local researchers – [Elaine Williams](#) and Jackie Foster – facilitated the on-ground research engagements.

This team worked together in Alice Springs between 22-26th November 2021. An initial set of M&E research questions was drafted and sent to the sub-committee who provided detailed edits and approval (see Appendix 2). Elaine and Jackie then worked with the CDU researcher to facilitate a series of interviews with 9 local leaders, meeting them at their homes or workplaces.

They also facilitated interviews with 2 key Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC) staff members closely associated with the TCAC LDM agreement and activities.

At the end of the week, the local researchers and CDU researcher held an interpretation session to clarify the local significance of stories that were shared and note key points that were arising. Further collation and interpretation was subsequently undertaken by the CDU research team while preparing this report; this included identification of key themes emerging from the interview responses and a review of available TCAC LDM agreements.

A draft of this report was shared with the LDM sub-committee so they could check that it aligns with their local understandings, and so they could suggest changes where appropriate. The report was also tabled at a Tangentyere LDM Sub-committee meeting and approved pending a number of changes which helped to emphasise key aspects of LDM reporting that were particularly important to local leaders. These changes were made prior to submission of the completed report.



Local research team (left to right): Elaine Williams (local researcher), Vanessa Davis (senior research advisor), Denise Foster (senior research advisor) and Jackie Foster (local researcher).

LDM in Alice Springs Town Camps

In Alice Springs, the history of LDM is embedded in the history of the Town Camps, and successive eras of housing management and control. There is a strong awareness of the effects of previous government regimes on housing management and control in the Town Camps, as well as the role that Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation has played in supporting Town Camp residents through these changes.

The Alice Springs Town Camps emerged out of the need for Aboriginal people gathering around the outskirts of Alice Springs to gain mutual support from each other and to have access to land, water, electricity and shelter and continuing culture. The Town Camps are on Arrernte land, historically have supported people from discrete language groups who recognise strong relationships to other remote and ancestral places.

In the mid-1970s a number of Town Camp Housing Associations were incorporated and authorised to manage their own housing. By 1979, these efforts were also supported by the incorporation of the Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC) which acted as services provider, and as an umbrella organisation connecting Town Camp Housing Associations. This working arrangement changed in 2009 with the creation of Living Areas Subleases which were under the jurisdiction of the federal government's Office of Township Leasing. This saw the control of housing and services shift away from local Housing Associations, as the federal government sub-contracted housing services to the NT government and other external organisations.

Today, LDM in Alice Springs is seen as a way to re-configure the working relations through which housing, essential and municipal services and other contracting and services delivery activities, are managed in the Town Camps. And through this, to support the visibility and strengthening of grass roots decision making that has always been active but has struggled to be taken seriously as a means for growing healthier, safer and more vibrant Aboriginal communities in Alice Springs.

This close interconnection of Town Camp leadership and Tangentyere Council is seen locally as the correct arrangement through which to engage the NTG LDM policy and develop new LDM initiatives. The organisation itself has invested in supporting the growth and proper conduct of LDM for the Town Camps, seeing it as appropriate to employ an LDM facilitator whose role is to support thorough processes of consultation with Town Campers around their LDM priorities.

Since the initiation of the policy, TCAC has worked with government around the signing of two accords:

- 4 July 2019 – TCAC LDM Commitment Agreement
- 28 July 2020 – LDM Heads of Agreement

The first of these affirmed the commitment of TCAC, and territory and federal governments to be working towards LDM practices and outcomes. The second was the outcome of a significant consultation process initiated by TCAC and carried out through an extensive process of research in the Town Camps, and workshops with Town Camp leaders. The involvement of

Tangentyere Council Research Hub has been integral to this consultation process.

These consultations culminated in the creation of TCAC 'Wellness Framework' which specifies key wellness domains, or priority areas, grounding LDM focus and activity:

- Shelter and Housing
- Keeping our country
- Community
- Healing mind, body and soul
- Knowledge
- Community Leadership
- Identity

These domains respond to the assertion from Town Campers that they want to be able to feel safe and well in their homes, and nurture strong leadership amidst new generations of young people. Each of these domains is, or will be, accompanied by specific schedules. These outlining transition plans and commitments are to be actioned in an attempt to work with a structured LDM arrangement which is locally determined, outcomes oriented and accountable to the residents of the Town Camps. Government commitments are to the specificities of these schedules, as well as to the overall LDM heads of Agreement.

All LDM activities within TCAC are currently overseen by a strong LDM sub-committee comprising Town Camp presidents and local leaders who work in conjunction with the TCAC LDM facilitator and relevant government departments.

As a historically significant and currently pressing issue for the Town Campers, the priority area of 'Shelter and Housing' has been the first to be addressed through LDM and the implementation of the TCAC LMD strategy and has seen the transition of Municipal and Essential services back to Tangentyere through a negotiated process of reinstituting previous successful services delivery relationships in the enactment of current LDM policy processes.

Local Evaluative Responses

In Alice Springs Town Camps, research was carried out as semi-structured discussion with elders and Town Camp leaders. These discussions were led by local researchers and were oriented around a set of questions approved by the LDM sub-committee. Here we provide details of these responses, bringing forward key LDM themes and concerns expressed by local leaders as they reflected on the meaning and experience of LDM in their place.

The strength of the LDM sub-committee

The Tangentyere LDM sub-committee is a good and safe space to be working together on local decision making. It allows everybody involved to work well, and think well, in arranging themselves to speak clearly to government and help good things to happen for Town Camps.

“When we were starting to get involved, we needed some other group on the side of Tangentyere, and this is the LDM sub-committee.

“We all laugh at our meetings. We always think everything is good but strong.

“The committee works well – we are all getting together and sharing thoughts amongst each other, some saying this, some saying that. At end we say this is what need to do everywhere through the agencies.

“LDM is making it easy for us to think. We want LDM, if we have new information for LDM then we bring Anna [Executive Officer, Focus on LDM] in and she talks to government.

“All presidents meet around the table at Tangentyere. When we sit around the [board room] table at Tangentyere, there is no hope of stepping on us!

Intergenerational authority in Town Camps

LDM is working well when it is aligned with the intergenerational passing of knowledge and authority within Town Camp families as they care for their places. This is happening, and it is allowing rightful leaders to speak strongly in the Council and show themselves as role models for younger generations.

“It's been good – all presidents right now, came together sit together over table. Talk about town camp. Maxine at Charles Creek, others too Hoppys, Warlpiri, Trucking Yards. All get together then all meet that room at Tangentyere, come together, talk about what we doing at Town Camp.

“Town Campers have been here years, the executive mob. See a generation change of leadership, presidents around the table. Town camp president position passed to daughter and granddaughter. Marlene's father, Marlene, Marlene's daughter coming through. Intergenerational leadership.

“Whatever happens at Town Camp is Town Camp business, how they get president and election. We can't influence anyone.

“I am in LDM work because I want to show my family they can be strong with me. Good voice for my camp.

Already active networks of local decision making

There have always been strong ways of connecting elders and making decisions. These processes help with solving problems in ways that support local people. The challenge has been when these are interrupted or not recognised by government. The work of LDM is beginning to allow an 'Aboriginal way of knowledge' to be supported.

“This method was from way back, Elders passing knowledge on. When our Elders were there we had to listen and learn how make decision and how widely they chose to make decision. On other side of [the LDM] agreement we have a lot of our Aboriginal way of knowledge but now are putting it together.

“Everybody can have their input and their say. They are the ones that know what is happening, should be the ones to make their decisions. Back in the day our old people were really strong, now starting to pick up again. One generation gap in there.

LDM helps focus on networks of services and to address the real gaps in service provision.

Keeping focussed on the important work that Tangentyere does, helps to show what needs to be done to care for people, not just organisations. This shows what people need everyday to keep going, and how to grow ways to care for each other, through connected services, here.

“Are a lot of services that Tangentyere offers – emergency cards, keeping doors open, etc. But these things are not always recognised from the top.

“[With LDM] we are able to sit in the board room and be showing the gaps in the services. So can see what needs to happen for night patrol, for example.

“Should focus where there is a gap in services, not where services see they can make money. Make decisions about funding – power to decide about funding and organisations that don't deliver.

“Government starting to provide funding. Specially, older people, aged care, community centre, young employees coming in as well. Might thinking about getting congress cultural advisor. Want this too. Don't want people to fly in and fly out. Learn cultural way. Can't just say been to one camp, have to visit all ones.

Having good control of housing and visitors helps families, language and environments stay strong

Many problems have been happening around housing, when it has been under control of Territory Housing. It's good to now be working to re-create the time when Housing Associations and TCAC had control of Town Camp boundaries, housing allocations, repairs and maintenance.

“It's time for us to be able to stand up and say what we want. Has been hard, used to be meeting when new residents come in. Since housing came can put whoever in there not consulting with people who are the right ones. Not family oriented any more.

“If we had to make the decisions, we would be in control of camp. People come in and out. I can't put a trespass order on someone from Hidden Valley, can't put trespass order on my yard. When had own housing association could apply for a trespass notice on one individual.

“We had our own association, already done properly. We had our housing association, decisions done properly. We knew family groups, prioritising who was sick or dialysis. Now, if HRG didn't meet and allocate they would put people in without consulting.

In particular, working through local leadership in Town Camps helps with keeping families strong. It supports language to be spoken at home, and for the right authority and services to be mobilised around supporting family connections.

“When family are together, means speak language.

“Really important to see our kind being decision makers, really important to see people with that expertise and knowledge of what is really important to improve lives of family on Town Camps or wherever they are.

“What I reckon is government should be funding more of youth patrols. Especially for our women and children, need to be more often, what would us men be without women.

Focussing on local 'problems of the moment'

There have been challenges dealing with everyday issues in town camps (such as rubbish collection and road maintenance). But when these issues can be dealt with by people who are living in the Town Camps, there are better outcomes, as well as strong leadership and connections amongst local people.

“Started this [LDM] work because we want to show that Town Campers can make decisions for ourselves, and that there are people in camp that have a lot of daily issues every day in their lives. Want to make changes and have their voices heard so we can take note of what they need.

“Local people need to be in control because everything that affects an Aboriginal person is what they deal with day to day in their family and community.

“For LDM, the story has come from the grass roots because the researchers got story from Town Camps through the consultation process.

“Each Town Camp has got their own list about what LDM is and what it is about. Each Town Camp have their own LDM meeting, your decision what you want to do.

“We're working on [LDM] because we shouldn't get the run around. Infrastructure, problems with the bins here. Got the wrong ones. Wrong, but they won't clear away. They said to call the Town Council, they said to ring Territory Housing, they told me to ring Affordable Housing. Affordable Housing is ours. Gave me the run around for 9 months.

Transparency and cultural competency in services provision

There are still lots of challenges around how local services providers work in the Town Camps, and how they work with Town Camp leaders and Tangentyere. Further LDM work needs to guide or work better with these organisations who are creating trouble for people in Town Camps.

“[NGO] are causing a lot of conflict. Getting heads of camps to disagree with HRG or community members. They were asked to leave Larapinta. First were giving vouchers, which was good. Went in that way. Then stopped, and people didn't want them there anymore.

“When Zodiac took over everyone found debt. No-one in time with rebates, don't come looking for them to tell if you owe. Do inspection but don't tell us about debt. Only find out they got bill when moving off.

“Can't ring maintenance fella up – maintenance only do stuff in your yard. Outside got to report it. Was chasing Power and Water when around – to ask him about what to do. When Tangentyere, we had our maintenance, Brown St CDP could help people do their yard. Tangentyere was one stop shop. What people wanted. Why it was created at the start.

“When there is a death, the people throw out the beds. That is cultural way. But Ingerreke don't do cultural awareness. Their awareness is not put in properly. They have an Aboriginal name, but don't know how to do that. Trying to make it back to what it was.

“When got housing jobs, meant to have people that understand language, but doesn't happen. But people get family member. I don't know Luritja, only Western Arrernte. Tell other people and can get them to talk.

LDM and the relationship between government and Tangentyere

When working on LDM, Tangentyere has needed to show their strong leadership. At times, the structure of government departments means that it is difficult for them to respond to what is on the ground, and to work in two worlds. However, if there is respect and attention paid by government this relationship can grow through LDM.

“The government have been playing hard ball. It is hard sometimes, and some [agencies] have question marks over their heads.

“Funding is still often based on existing areas of opportunity for government rather than on the priorities of Town Campers. We have set up systems – through the LDM schedules – to be able to take clear priorities to government, but we still haven’t got some of the schedules up.

“Government still asking us to be proving ourselves. Until what? What is the goal they want us to reach?

“Often, we are still having to convince new government staff about the schedules we have presented, rather than having it acknowledged that the Chief Minister has authorised these processes.

“Sometimes, they are hearing but not listening. Listening is blocked. They talk, talk going to help people but don’t listen because it’s all more for themselves.

“Can live in black and white world. Government needs to start living in two worlds, we live in two, they need to start living in two worlds.

“If they [government mob] speak with big words, I speak my own language. I tell them, you can talk in language and listen in English. Encouraging them to talk in their own language so they can be confident.

“NTG should be listening more and seriously. Not asking other people what are they doing. Come, ask us, eye-to-eye, don’t go beating around bushes. If we want to talk to the government executive, then we get them in. But if want to talk to us, should get us in.



Local Leaders' Statements



Maxine Carlton on how LDM enables government to see our governance

“When we had our own Housing Association, it was already done properly. Decisions were done properly. We knew the family groups and were prioritising who was sick or on dialysis [for housing]. We should all be sitting at the table, meet with the grass roots. That is purpose of having a president at each place. We meet each other, meeting after meeting every week – we are pushing for our Town Camps, what we want. Tangentyere means “people working together”. That name is not really getting recognised here. Government only sees the service we deliver.”

Benedict Stevens on ancestral connections to country as the basis of local decision making keeping Town Camps alive and healthy

“Want Town Camps to run good way, know families and how connected, all about young kids growing up they are next leader running the community. I’ve been here at Hidden Valley almost all life. Grew up here with parents and grandparents. Before had tribal areas Pitjantjara, Larapinta, Arrernte mob, Eastern Arrernte mob, Abbott’s Ntaria mob. Each camp had a leader who had the responsibility to look after dreaming. Every one of the camps at the beginning had responsibility for looking after their sacred sites. It’s all mixed up now, but law and culture is still surviving and we pass over father to son. I’m doing the work now. Because I grew up at Hidden Valley. It’s all about Alice Springs to me. This is where I can be. Slot into cultural way always here first. Is in me.”



Marlene Rubuntja on how talking up – even in language – is where LDM starts for young people

“We’re making this place good. We want to be strong, and to start putting young ones in. These young ones, they should be like me, talk up to keep the community strong. I tell people, talk up! If you mob shame and can’t talk English, then talk Arrernte, Luritja. There are people who can understand. When whitefella come we say you can talk in language. You can talk in language and listen in English. I’m encouraging them to talk in their language so can be confident. One mob might be whisper – but stand up and talk loud!”

Eileen Hoosan on the long history of struggle that Tangentyere has had with different governments and policy regimes before LDM

“This is the best policy they [NTG] have ever made! LDM gives us that power to talk to government directly. We are in a contract about local decision making. We will tell them what LDM means, and they can’t sign off without us. They can’t go around or over us. For over 40 years, Tangentyere has fought for our existence. We have always had to look out for ourselves. We are always at risk of government policies and other organisations jumping in and halting projects. We’ve all had to be involved in looking after ourselves. There’s a big difference between Tangentyere and other organisations.”

Local Leaders' Statements



Braydon Kantjirra on working from local experience and strength in communicating with government around LDM

“ Because we see what is happening in our town camp and we know what is happening, not think. We live with that. Working with Anna [Executive Officer, Focus on LDM] and other committees and sub-committee group we make sure that Anna is going to do the right work. We have made sure she has done it. She asks us for advice about how to go. If they [government] speak with big words, I speak my own language. ”



Philip Miller on the long history of local decision making connecting Town Camp leaders

“ [Local decision making] been start long time. Been gone through all the communities, all organisations, got all people together to come talk every night. My grandfather had been fighting pretty hard, because he was fighting this is why we have got what we have now. Everyone works together. All the presidents getting better. ”



Elizabeth Eraladson on LDM as a return to traditional authority

“ Everybody can have their input and their say, they are the ones that know what is happening, should be the ones to make their decisions. Back in the day our old people were really strong. Then we went down, and now we're starting to pick up again. With Tangentyere, we are getting our housing back. Tangentyere have been fighting really hard to get housing back. ”

Important themes

THEME 1

LDM is making visible the critical role of Tangentyere Council in supporting networked leadership among the town camps

“ Government is starting to look at Tangentyere and what have been involved with and what beginning was. Tangentyere means working together that's what that means, let's all get together. And government are looking at that, we are working together they are wanting to join in. ”

The governance structure of Tangentyere Council is as a network of Town Camp Leaders. While it also operates as a service provider, this governance structure remains always visible and integral to the trust and relationship that Town Campers have with the organisation.

Decision making and negotiation of services through Tangentyere is always invoking interconnections between the Town Camps, and between Town Camps and ancestral places. In working with Tangentyere on LDM, government are also participating in strengthening the relations through which Tangentyere acts as a hub supporting its constituent leadership.

“ Back in day Tangentyere was a one stop shop. Would cater for all Town Camp residents as well as new Town Camp residents and community mob. They come in and use that thing, was central area. They had a bus service. Worked really well and had good model but was too successful, so had to cut everything down. ”

“ We should all be sitting at the table, meet with the grass roots. That is purpose of having a president at each place. We meet each other, meeting after meeting every week – we are pushing for our town camps, what we want. ”

THEME 2

LDM is responding to the need for local control over housing in keeping emerging generations safe

“ Want camps run good way with families who are properly connected because young people growing up will be new leaders. ”

“ All the people have been starting to get house in town. This is a problem because they are getting grog with ID. I'm telling that true story, all people from Town Camp are going and drinking at house even if are not close family, and they do wrong things. They are just meeting for drinking, not meeting together as a family. Bad things happen and so more fighting and then payback and problems just go on. ”

Elders spoke strongly about the problems that have arisen through the mismanagement of housing; particularly through processes that failed to prioritise family cohesion as a principle informing decision making. With good control over housing there are stronger networks of family, language and caring for places and country that can be maintained.

“ We don't need more houses, we only need few people coming in. ”

“ We go for the executive meeting. I talk to them and I'm trying hard to tell them what needs to happen here. I always say that [Larapinta visitor] mob need to go – they are spoiling creek, make people sick. Makes it unhealthy. You mob come from bush you need to go back. But we are the right people to talk for that. ”

THEME 3

Configuring right networks of services allows responses to local issues that respect the country and appropriate ways of working together

When talking about services delivery, there was still a concern that many other external organisations were drawing their funding for programs which address problems identified by other people, and in other places. Supporting alignment of services with local practices for understanding and managing local issues is an important aspect of LDM, and the healthy flourishing of Town Camps.

“ Where is that Town Camp domestic violence mob, they should be the face – where have they gone? Now all white faces there. Don't like idea white people stand in front and get funds from black people, should be black people be out the front. ”

“ Lhere Artepe should come in. Night patrol are running around, should be Lhere Artepe, Traditional Owners for Alice Springs. ”

“ If have people like Ingerreke, and like [NGO], are obstacles for us, pushing us back. They never come to the table. Should come to us, sit down to our board and say you mob doing this services, is gap in this service, meet at table. Not to go around cause confrontation. Other Aboriginal services too. ”

“ Tangentyere means people working together. When Tang first established had leader for many areas, camps, Men's 4 Corners, Women's Committee. Was strong, really strong back then. Because of intervention went down again. LDM picked up where they cut off. ”

THEME 4

“LDM allows grass roots research”

There has always been a strong tradition of locally-led research at Tangentyere. LDM is enabling this research interest and capacity to be turned towards ways of supporting Town Camps.

“ We have always known the passion for local decisions. Now got other funding. All years of research we have been listening to people on the ground but no way to pass it on. Only involved in projects – didn’t know how to report thing like that. ”

“ It’s been good to have that ‘health habitat’ [research] mob – yellow caps, making sure everyone’s living conditions are safe. ”

This work includes the consultation process that has given rise to the TCAC LDM Wellness Framework, and processes for tracking and maintaining its impact.

THEME 5

“Should come to us, sit down”

There is an open invitation from the LDM sub-committee members for government and other organisations to seek meetings with them and keep talking face-to-face.

“ Should come to us, sit down, talk to our board and say you mob doing this services, is gap in this service. Meet at table. Not to go around cause confrontation. We should all be sitting at the table, meet with the grass roots. ”

“ If we want to talk to the executive, then we get the government in. But if want to talk to us, should get us in. If they come and sit here at this board table at Tang, they have no hope of stepping on us. Strong committee. ”

This can include working together to ensure services and supports are well integrated and aligned to the needs of Town Camps. It can also include government sharing their stories and feedback as part of an ongoing learning and monitoring and evaluation process where TCAC does not just providing feedback to government on LDM performance, but communication also flows the other way.

What's working? What needs more work?

	What's working?	What needs more work?
Self determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TCAC LDM sub-committee and the guiding role of Town Camp leaders in LDM. ● Prioritisation of housing as a core first issue and focus of LDM. ● TCAC board room as a site for LDM discussions between TCAC and government staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support for the key role of Town Camp presidents as first and final authorities. ● Responsiveness of government activity around the particular specified priority areas.
Place-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on Town Camp safety and wellbeing in LDM activities. ● Valuing grass roots research and local experience in developing and actioning LDM priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alignment of external services with LDM local leaders and TCAC. ● Responsiveness around municipal issues by involved organisations.
Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Select tender and contracting processes supporting TCAC housing and MES contract delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintenance and growth of culture of generosity in government engagements around LDM. ● Literacy in and commitment to 'wellness domains' by involved government and NGO agencies.
Co-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role of the TCAC LDM facilitator brokering and mobilising connections between Town Camps and government staff and programs. ● Consolidation of municipal and essential services under TCAC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prioritising local knowledge in orienting services to address local 'problems of the moment'. ● Support for locally appropriate housing allocations. ● Active support from government departments in orienting resourcing around the 'wellness domains'.
Community control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tangentyere's role as a correct and authorised organisation auspicing LDM. ● Strengthening of Town Camp leaders in remembering and strengthening networks between Town, and between Town Camps and dreaming places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of local languages in LDM processes and initiatives. ● Greater local control over visitor management. ● Focus on 'family cohesion' as a key principle in governance and service delivery.

Local Decision Making

Jawoyn Region Community Report

Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation August 2022



With contributions from:

Lisa Mumbin, Jane Runyu-Fordimail, John Berto,
Robert Friel, Melissa Rogers, Marcus Rogers, Sylvia Maroney,
Chiyo Andrews, Betty Berry, Jocelyn McCarthy,
Pip Gordon and Peter Beasley

Key Insights

- LDM allows us to make important decisions under the right authority using the land claim as our foundation. It allows people to continue the vision and governance practices of Jawoyn elders who successfully fought for their land in 1989.
- There are existing, locally successful practices within the representational structure of the Jawoyn Association Board that allow the integration of voices and opinions of different tribes and makes them visible to government.
- LDM is currently offering an opportunity to re-establish the vitality of Aboriginal decision making as the Jawoyn Association is respected as a responsible voice to government, and politicians and public servants start engaging with Jawoyn people through Jawoyn protocols.
- New partnerships, facilitated through LDM, have supported the recognition of Jawoyn strength and leadership through Nyrrunggulung-RISE, Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup, Jawoyn Rangers, Nitmiluk Tours, Jawoyn Contracting and other areas of Jawoyn Association business.
- A key purpose of LDM is to concentrate on jobs for young people, particularly by integrating services and VET courses so there can be more work for Jawoyn on country as LDM allows us to move our focus from our town to our country.
- When Jawoyn people are working together it strengthens Jawoyn culture. LDM is supporting Jawoyn people managing more everyday services, fixing roads and helping people to access parts of country they otherwise wouldn't be able to.
- The processes of negotiating the Werenbun LDM agreement, (i.e. sitting with local people under a tree, listening to their visions and helping the agreements to become real through the involvement of politicians and public servants) works well for Jawoyn people. This keeps people and country healthy.
- Jawoyn people can see where the real gaps are in services and this LDM helps them work with government in addressing them.
- The best way to support better and growing partnerships around LDM is through sharing 'good stories' that celebrate Jawoyn, and governments' achievements, and that model the right path to follow.

What we did

In the Jawoyn Region, the CDU Ground Up team held initial conversations with the Jawoyn Association CEO, John Berto, who provided initial guidance and authorisation around the project.

He proposed that the LDM M&E research work could focus on discussions with key board members and several of the Jawoyn Association affiliated enterprises. He also provided introductions to Peter Beasley (Nyrrunggulung-RISE coordinator) and Pip Gordon (Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup coordinator). The possibility of working with local researchers was raised, however there were no obvious avenues for pursuing this at the time.

The CDU Ground Up researcher met with Jawoyn Association board members and staff between 8-11 Feb 2022. A series of unstructured interviews were carried out with: Robert Friel, Melissa Rogers, Marcus Rogers, Sylvia Moroney (Jawoyn Association board members); Lisa Mumbin (Jawoyn Association chairwoman); John Berto (Jawoyn Association CEO); Jane Runyu-Fordimail (Nitmiluk Tours CEO, Jawoyn Association board member) Peter Beasley (Nyrrunggulung-RISE coordinator); Pip Gordon (Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup coordinator) as well as William Bridgeman (Regional Network Group – Big Rivers

Region). Between 17-24th Feb CDU also spoke over the phone with Chiyo Andrews, Jocelyn McCartney and Betty Berry (senior leaders from the Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup).

All interview discussions were focussed broadly on what local decision making means for Jawoyn, and the experiences and outcomes of being involved in recent NTG Local Decision Making work, enabling participants to provide insights and stories of LDM in their own terms. Notes and photos were collected by the CDU researcher.

Interpretation of the interview material was subsequently undertaken by the CDU research team while preparing this report; this included identification of key themes emerging from the interview responses and a review of available LDM agreements.

This community report was returned to the participants for comment and finalised after receiving their approval from the Jawoyn Association CEO.



LDM in Jawoyn Region

Jawoyn Country includes the traditional lands of 18 clan groups and stretches across an area of 55,000 square kilometers, extending north west from Katherine to Pine Creek, north east to the southern part of Kakadu National Park and across to Bulman, as well as south west to Mataranka.

When talking about LDM, many Jawoyn leaders tracked the origins of local decision making to the Land Claim that was successfully granted in 1989 after many years of difficult struggle by Jawoyn leaders. As a new contract with the Australian Government, the Land Claim acknowledged the sovereign ownership of the Jawoyn country by Jawoyn people. It saw the handing back of Jawoyn Lands including Nitmiluk National Park, and was accompanied by the inauguration of the Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation (JAAC).

Current LDM activities are seen as a continuation of the vision of the elders that was expressed as they fought for their traditional lands. Drawing from the foundation of their land ownership, Jawoyn people are continuing to work together as connected clan groups, representing Jawoyn places in collaborating with government and other organisations, caring for their country and sharing it with others.

There are well established governance and representational structures within JAAC that allow for a strong and unified commitment to LDM. A Council of Elders provides support and guidance to the JAAC Board of Directors. This board consists of twelve directors who each provide a voice for the respective communities or homelands in which they are residents or for which they have responsibility, including: Barunga, Jilkminggan, Jodetluk, Katherine, Rockhole, Manyallaluk, Werenbun, Mulgga Camp, Miali Brumby, Pine Creek, Wugularr, Kybrook and Binjari.

JAAC has signed two LDM Multi-Agency Partnership agreements:

- 2 Nov 2018 – LDM Multi-Agency Partnership (MAP) Agreement and Implementation Plan
- 4 Oct 2021 – Local Decision Making Implementation Plan 2021 – 2023

Partners with key roles in this implementation of the LDM agreements are JAAC Board, NT Government, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Roper Gulf Regional Council.

The guiding vision through these partnership agreements has been:

“to bring the Jawoyn people together as one nation, care for country and develop economic independence.”

The initial MAP implementation plan focussed on four social and economic priorities: preserving Jawoyn culture; business development and contracting; local jobs and training; and

member services. As well as three strategic enablers: LDM capacity building; LDM MAP plan implementation and resourcing; and effective communication and engagement. The second agreement refined these priorities and now works with the focus areas of: preserving Jawoyn culture and heritage; housing/civil construction programs and opportunities; local jobs and local training.

JAAC have also supported the development of the Werenbun Homeland LDM agreement and implementation plan that was signed on 24 January 2022.

“In the LDM agreement, government responsibility and all stakeholders are coming together. I find it really acceptable because we’re all in it together.”
– Lisa Mumbin, Chair, Jawoyn Association

“Is a whole raft of things the [LDM] agreement has helped bring about. If there was a change of government and it was removed, it would be a complete disaster. Opportunities simply won’t be there.”
– John Berto, CEO, Jawoyn Association

“With NTG and whoever is out there, very happy to work with everyone to be better together, showing our country.”
– Melissa Rogers, Board Member, Jawoyn Association

Local Evaluative Responses

Research in the Jawoyn region was carried out by a CDU Ground Up researcher sitting with Jawoyn elders and board members and hearing about what local decision making means to them, and their experiences of LDM. Their responses are presented here clustered under a number of key themes. In these discussions, Jawoyn leaders were reflecting on both the Jawoyn Region LDM Agreement, and the Werenbun Agreement signed in February 2022.

Local decision making has been happening forever, it was first recognised by governments back with the Land Claim

- “Local Decision Making has been, it's been around for a long time. It's just not been pinpointed. Started working together as stakeholders, and having that in place, when we won the land back. That's when that started. Having that agreement set in stone, it works for us.
- “The Land Claim was laying the foundation, there were lots of changes during that time. Our Elders were very strong. It was our land and we fought for it. Some didn't understand till later the purpose of why we needed our land back. It wasn't to take it away from people but to share it with them.

LDM has given people certainty, and makes communities like Werenbun visible

- “A little community like Werenbun, I've seen the struggles, what happens in the community and how difficult it can be when there's not a lot of services there. We've been trapped in from floods, and people are not able to get out of the community and stop there and feel like nothing's happening.
- “Local decision making came about, it sort of gave us a certainty that things will start to happen you know. If we sit down and start talking about some of this stuff, we'll get some outcomes happening.
- “What we wanted to do was to talk to someone at a higher level to get some action happening. I think was Selena Uibo, who we know pretty well and as a member for that area and well respected by the community there so she's been good value for us.

LDM is another way of helping us remember our history through our great leaders

- “When we talk about our Jawoyn history, we talk about our great leaders and people that does a lot for us, but no recognition for these people. It's not right. Need to make our younger people aware of who these people were and what they've done so young people can focus in both ways.
- “Our work is driven by vision and dreams of the elders, always in our hearts. We are taking this seriously through leadership.
- “Our leaders' names are recognised in Nitmiluk National Park - Sandy Baruwei, and Peter Jatbula recognised by the Jatbula trail. Keeping those homelands and those people visible and recognised, it's really important.

LDM works well with the strong Indigenous leadership and governance structures already at work within JAAC

- “Back in the day, we had 52 clan groups, and now we are down to 18. Some groups didn't have family to carry on. Now, instead of going around to each individual clan group to make a decision, we have the 10 communities on the Jawoyn board. It was planned out – to get members from each country. Representation of Jawoyn country, and Council of Elders sit above us and guide us through.
- “Having this structure here, they, Jawoyn, thought this through. Having operation here 100% Indigenous, you know, 100% Jawoyn. That was the best thing that ever happened. And I'm proud to say that we've already started that process long time ago.
- “Our vision is like a guardian angel – sitting on board is like listening to old people. Old people, elder group, came together as Jawoyn. Said don't worry about breaking up, go together as one nation. Different, different clan group, but come together as Jawoyn.

LDM is allowing us to focus on the country and homelands, not just the town and the Shire

- “Government is accountable now, so that all those services [in Werenbun] need to be met. It's a bit different in the town. You can be part of a Shire, but at the end of the day, because Werenbun is a small community the Shire only do a certain amount of things. Because they have only got a limited amount of money, the bigger communities will always get most of the chunk of the money.
- “Having LDM with Jawoyn and government and other stakeholders is proving to be you know, in working order. Having that relationship between government and the people itself. And, like, it's being the voice with Jawoyn it's the voice of the people directed up. Jawoyn sat and listened. All the things that we've been trying to do you know, most of them came from the people.
- “Last year – rangers got opportunity to work on crown land. Fire knowledge, savanna mob from Vic did training – timber creek, Boroloola, other groups there too. Broadened our mind – usually they don't see Jawoyn rangers working on country. We went to a women's forum – healthy women's forum.

“ Can do maintenance on access roads to sacred sites, funding hasn't been there in the past for this. Old people want to get to the river. But the road is seriously bad, and it takes 2 hours to get there. Now [with our new assets] we can upgrade the road. Upgrade access roads for community. Everyone will be flying over there in their commodores. Once an asset is yours you can use it for all kinds of things.

LDM allows a vision for good housing and connected services

“ [Now in Werenbun] they have a bus that goes out there from the health service. Sunrise health comes to pick people up and bring them into town and to go to clinics, and that. I recognized that there was also another bus going out there for school to pick up a young person for schooling. And then I think it was mentioned in the agreement, maybe we should look at having the one bus instead of two? So we connected that up a bit, you know. Could have the one bus instead of duplication of services.

“ The trouble with organisations is you can get duplicate all the time, doubling up. Costs a lot more money in the long run, and it takes money out of your budget. Why not just link in with this mob, everyone is not an expert in everything. Some people, other groups might have that expertise and something that we don't have.

“ I think we could see the big picture that some of the local decision making was gonna make things a lot easier for us to do business. Yeah. And it's not just one group to do things on their own all the time, it's sort of linking everybody together.

But we're still worried about the schools

“ School not communicating with kids at school. Not encouraging kids who are looking for help. Want to reach out and help, support 2 way learning. Have that at school, but not strong information.

“ Shame is the big problem in ourselves. Going to school – sit down with them, take an Elder with them and talk with them. This year I am doing fire project with 15 ladies. Same then as learning on country with Banatjarl.

Our communities are starting to network together better under LDM, they are growing stronger and feeling healthier

“ Having this agreement brought us together, in a way. You know, because for a long time there, we've been left to our own.

“ Biggest achievements [from LDM] is the changes of the community. We know there has been changes in other community. Can drive out there and see the difference, it's all lighter. I'm happy. Feel happy when country lighten up, people working together.

“ Stakeholders coming together. We all play a role in what we do and Nitmiluk is the end product. Because at the end of the day, it's what Jawoyn and what parks would like to see as the outcome. This country – that we are caring for, and that we are working here.

LDM helps guide funding in ways that are more aligned with what people are needing on the ground

“ Before we were trying to make the best decisions based on what we believed in. But the government was saying, no, no, no. They would say: We're giving you money for this, and this is how we want you to spend it. But it wasn't beneficial. Lots of communities could get in trouble, because when they were given funding, but it was not what they wanted the funding for.

“ Ongoing mission of Jawoyn is to try and get as many jobs that are also in community, and working for Jawoyn Association around business. The only way we can really achieve that is to have a look at what's out there, what opportunities are out there. In terms of commercial contracts, for example, and identify that there is the housing repair maintenance contract.

“ LDM is helping us to secure more funding. We were able to secure \$10m worth of funding to but the Beagle Inn. Will help with Jawoyn jobs training, synergies with the gorge, can training people here and send to the gorge.

Through LDM there have been new government contracting arrangements that have made it easier for us to connect services in ways that make sense

“ NTG changed the whole way they ran the [housing] tender. Roper Gulf had what they called the maintenance contracts. So, taps, stoves, that sort of thing. Then there is also ‘major works’, which is carried about by a group of contractors. And those types of contracts would be renovations. So NTG changed that, and they put the two contracts in the one contract. Because we had a local decision making agreement, they said we can actually give you a direct tender through this process.

“ It’s been a fantastic opportunity to be part of. You know we still had to put a price [for the housing maintenance contracts] in. The rules are no different, we still have to do the work, but you just don’t have to compete on this one. It’s about creating opportunities. Those other businesses had the contracts for years and had lots of opportunity. But where did that money go?

Working relationships with government

“ Yeah, having this agreement, it sort of levels it a little. Each and every department is responsible for what’s supposed to happen in the group or organisation. And that’s how it’s supposed to be.

“ Working with senior public servants, for example. From medium levels through to senior, all of them are now aware of what people want for themselves for the future.

“ We like Jake Qunilivan really well. He’s on the national parks board, and culture centre board. And some of the other people that are in the government, we’ve got to know them more. Which is a good thing. And you can get things done that way. The young fellas working with [Jake] now play football with our people. So, they are really respected. That really helps.

“ If I raise something, it goes straight to the top. To an executive director, a CEO or the Chief. Can’t do that without an agreement. The other week I had an issue with the R&M contract. Ken Davies popped in then the executive director was on the phone and drove down to see us.

The Jawoyn Board is showing strong leadership and bringing up new young leaders

“ If you look at our Jawoyn board, most of the members are young people. Some Elders have passed away, and I think we lost a lot of knowledge. We know that. But I think our board is growing as a board. They really are. A lot of them are switched on people, very, very smart people. And which is good, and I think the future Jawoyn is in good hands.

“ When I first started being on the board, was a bit nervous. Came to table, didn’t ask questions, but now all of us have certificate. Sometimes we agree, sometimes disagree. Got strong foundation always looking up to elders. We are proud to be younger generation coming up. Want young people to follow our footsteps. Proud of what Jawoyn is achieving.

“ The Jawoyn board, we’re not taking [country] for anyone, but to share. I speak strong for country. We are working the best we can to make our people, our life, in an independent way to live. Jobs for Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. Country where they can feel free to walk. We are wanting to go further in developing in other areas. CDP, building, construction, civil works. All these company that we have got and created to make it possible for all people

LDM allows contemporary governance of government business to be conducted in a way consistent with traditional governance practices

- “ We support each other, we are like a family. We have respect for our Elders on the board. We have an Elder board as well – Elders, us, managements CEO, that’s the structure.
- “ Government will come in and say, you know, you need to do this and this and this. But then Jawoyn can say, ‘well, no’. Since this is our land, you come to the table. This park, you know, we’ve never ever want to close it off to anyone. It’s here for everyone to share. So, yeah, to have that good relationship, you need to have that, that good understanding of how managers work and how operators work.
- “ You know, having that peace of mind for the community. Knowing that the organisation of the Head Tribe being involved in housing, employment out there, civil construction – knowing that their roads are going to be better off.
- “ You know, you have your normal, bit of banter, in the conference room and things but at the end of the day, we walk out of the office, it’s all right. We come to an agreement. And that’s how its best to walk out the door. That’s how it is with Jawoyn. Everyone has their own opinion, but talk it out. Best way to run an organisation



Local Leaders' Statements



Lisa Mumbin on local decisions as working partnerships

Local decision making, when it came to us, we wanted more working in partnership to make things happier for our community. Signing the agreement, we took a responsibility to achieve whole meaning and purpose of a community. Sitting together community workshopping putting things together in all levels of building that community and creating something that is going to help people – but now to carry both sides of responsibility. Government responsibility and all stakeholders, all coming together. I find it really acceptable because we're all in it together. Biggest achievements are the changes of the community. We know there has been changes in other community. You can drive out there and see the difference, it's all lighter. I'm happy. Feel happy when country lighten up, people working together.



John Berto on process of LDM and identifying local priorities

If you go back to the first agreement, and the concept of Jawoyn coming up with their own plans for identifying priorities and issues. That mean a lot to Jawoyn that they had the opportunity to do that. Through this process. It's been really good. It was really right for Jawoyn. Other people, the community, and the board, the elders had never experienced this process. To sign up for an agreement between three levels of government. We're all working together to achieve the main objectives for Jawoyn people. Jobs are an important part of the outcomes. And just having got to have a say to identify what basically is important. What is the priority – not from the government down, but upwards.



Jane Runyu-Fordimail on the importance of a recognised Indigenous organisation working between community and government

Before, when people have issues on the community, they need to ring every department to try and get to the person that is responsible for that thing. Now if they have issues with housing, if they have issues with whatever, they can call Jawoyn and be directed to the right place. That is my understanding of having the LDM now. Having that peace of mind for the community. That's what the association is all about. So, it's not about [community] control. But it's managing. You're managing business on your own land. I don't like the word controlling. If people read it, they say, what are they doing? Who are they? It's having that relationship or being the buffer between the community and the government.



Sylvia Maroney, Melissa Rogers and Marcus Rogers on maintaining connections with Elders in working for Jawoyn Association on LDM

Sitting on board is like listening to old people. The old people, elder group, came together as Jawoyn. We are different, different clan group, but come together as Jawoyn. Got strong foundation always looking up to Elders. We are proud to be younger generation coming up. Want young people to follow our footsteps. Proud of what Jawoyn is achieving. Went through bad and rough times, we didn't fall. Stated there and fight back until everything good again.

Local Leaders' Statements



Robert Friel on the importance of LDM supporting jobs for young people on the country won for them by their forefathers

For the future, I really want to see young people being involved a lot more and be able to get work. We need to try and find solutions for young people at school and getting them into VET courses, so they get some and do some work experience out at Nitmiluk. There are not really Ranger traineeships in the park. One day we want to run the park ourselves. But this [barrier] is not letting us do that. This would have been good for Max [a young leader] to get to go out there because he's his great grandfather was one of the leaders that helped us win that country and his name is out there. His name is everywhere out there, but we couldn't get a foot in the door.



John Berto on LDM as working the social and commercial together

There are the two sides: the commercial side and the social side of where you want to get direct benefit. The agreement does both of these. For example, we are in the process of buying equipment, excavators, big trucks etc. We can skill people up to become civil construction operators. And these jobs are quite sustainable. It's also good for country. Now we can do maintenance on access roads to sacred sites. The old people have wanted to get to the river, but the road was bad. Now we can upgrade the road, and everyone will be flying over there in their commodores. We're just doing it. Everyone is working. We're into the second agreement, which we have fine-tuned a lot. Can feel it humming, it's beautiful.

Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1

LDM facilitating the crucial social and cultural work needed for healthy housing

Through tender processes facilitated by NT government, JAAC has received contracts to manage housing tenancies as well as repairs and maintenance. This was seen as a valuable achievement of LDM and an important outcome for the well-being of Jawoyn people.

“ That’s where I’m happy with this LDM – to fix houses, give opportunity to someone living in crowded house for so long. Give a little bit of freedom. ”

“ Jawoyn is contracting and it is our worker that goes out to fix things for housing. Go and do inspection, talk about how long visitors can stay, what rules are. Go out and see houses – take photo of what needs to be fixed. We ask about their tenancy agreement: ask them do they understand? Tell them, if they have problem, call us. ”

“ Now that Jawoyn has got the contract people feel able to speak. We can talk in Kriol. Kriol is most common language. We speak in that. If we’re saying old man, for your light, buy your own globe and put it in – we say it in Kriol. He knows what we mean. ”

“ It is ‘us’ so don’t feel as shame to get behind on rent, can talk about it, instead of feeling shame with government officers. ”

When Jawoyn are the link between the tenants and the government, people feel safer at home, can make healthy decisions, and have less cause to feel ‘shame’ in their engagements with external organisations.

CASE STUDY 2

The Werenbun Agreement: the first homelands-based LDM agreement

A new LDM agreement was signed with Jawoyn leaders from Werenbun homeland on 24 January 2022. This was the first LDM agreement that has been signed with a homelands group. It was the result of two years of discussion pursued by Ryan Burruwei and other people connected with Werenbun.

This LDM agreement was seen as giving people certainty and makes communities like Werenbun visible. The consultation process leading to this agreement was considered excellent by those involved. There are now other local groups who are interested in following a similar path.

“ Lots of ideas come out of the Werenbun consultation. It's giving the hope to the community that someone out there in government is actually noticing them and they're not forgotten. This is a good way for the community to bring them together and have a voice – their voice. ”

“ Because governments accountable now, so that all those services need to be met. It's a bit different in the town. You can be part of a Shire, but at the end of the day, because Werenbun is a small community the Shire only do a certain amount of things. Because they have only got a limited amount of money, the bigger communities will always get most of the chunk of money. ”

“ But the thing about Werenbun is that it's an important community because of the elders that are buried in the cemetery. And these elders are very important people that actually helped win the Jawoyn land claim for us. And there was no recognition for them. They need recognition. ”

There was also very notable appreciation for the consultancy process that led to the crafting of the Werenbun agreement.

“ Tanya does [the consultation] really well, community loves it. Sit under a tree hours. Was visionary to the people. They are uneducated, but they know what they want. They know what they were about. Sitting down under a tree, during the day. It's the people's choice and decision to work in that ways. They could see their visions coming real. ”

CASE STUDY 3

Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup

Banatjarl homeland, also known as King Valley, has always been a place for healing where women come together. The Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup is also a Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation enterprise.

The first Jawoyn LDM agreement (2018-2020) included provision for business support for the Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup within a commitment to Preserving Jawoyn Culture and Heritage. The second agreement has extended this commitment to also support and fund evaluation of the group so as to make evident their important role and significance in ongoing Jawoyn life.

Particularly during COVID lock-down periods, was difficult for these senior women to get together without support. Coordination through the group, and increased visibility through LDM and other contracts and activities, has helped them to remain connected in growing and maintaining cultural networks and maintaining ways of making decisions collectively.

“ With the formation of Banatjarl women, I knew what to put together. We’re not letting go of our culture. Banatjarl is about going one strong direction. ”

“ LDM has changed how the Banatjarl women are able to be recognised and exercise their cultural authority. Being recognised through awards or public acknowledgement has led to them being listened to. Events they have supported, such as the Healthy country forum, shows that women’s networks are essential. ”

“ What we always do is sit outside [at Banatjarl] and tell the young children a story. If we make bush medicine, they come and join in. Old lady, my sister-in-law come with her daughter, do weaving. My grandkids learn from old lady, they enjoy doing that. Going fishing and taking them out to dreaming place. Before we go catch fish, turtle, have to go to dreaming place, have to call out and mention dreaming place. They enjoy that, being there, cleaning up the roads, going out, getting turtle, fish, black bream. ”

What's working? What needs more work?

	What's working?	What needs more work?
Self determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong functioning of the JAAC board, its representational structure and guidance by board elders. Diversification, and operational strength of JAAC and associated enterprises. Autonomy of Jawoyn leaders administering, managing and sharing their country and Nitmiluk National Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forums and other processes of support growing connections between Jawoyn women leaders and external groups and organisations. Resolution of current native title claims. Ongoing attention to appropriate LDM opportunities and partnerships for all Aboriginal groups in the region (e.g. beyond Jawoyn).
Place-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment of local staff in diverse areas – housing, construction, civil works, rangers etc. Nitmuluk park upgrades. Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grp nurturing intergenerational connections of people, place and language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture of support for both-ways learning and language work in the schools. Infrastructure honouring past elders and leaders. Networks of connection between dispersed Jawoyn communities.
Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NTG preferred tender and contracting arrangements. Work with LDM agreements and implementation plans as 'live documents'. Responsiveness of all levels of NTG staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension of LDM principles and commitments to external services providers. Continuity between training and employment for women.
Co-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work of the local consultant developing Werenbun LDM agreement and implementation plan. Integration of housing tenancy and repairs & maintenance contract for delivery by JAAC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce development and training for young people through integration of schools, VET and employment opportunities in tourism and Nitmiluk.
Community control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jawoyn people managing housing tenancy, repairs and maintenance. Ability to access targeted government funding (e.g. for purchase of Beagle Inn). Close connection between JAAC and Nitmiluk boards, and Nitmiluk-NT Parks partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement of young people in aspects of decision making board management and work with government. Growing strength as Jawoyn through business and cultural exchange connections with other Aboriginal groups, and local industry (e.g. Vista Gold).

Groote Archipelago Community Report

Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation
August 2022



Research facilitated by:

Anindilyakwa Land Council

Key Insights

- NTG Local Decision Making (LDM) in the Groote Archipelago is seen as a way for existing networks of Anindilyakwa connectedness – 14 clans all working together – to thrive and become visible.
- The fundamental goal of all LDM is seen as the flourishing of new generations of connected Anindilyakwa young people on country.
- LDM is seen as Aboriginal groups working together through their ancestral and kin authorities to improve the practices and local outcomes by transferring control of key local service delivery from government agencies to locally run groups. The Anindilyakwa Land Council, as the peak representative body of the Anindilyakwa people, is critical to supporting these groups and their aspirations.
- LDM also involves seeking productive alignments between government and industry investment to address issues in local infrastructure required for services delivery.
- Housing can be co-designed and co-delivered to fit in with ancestral ownership rules and help solve particular problems of particular groups of people. This is also the case in health, law and justice, education etc.
- LDM initiatives in local organisations have meant rapid growth. Identifying and empowering local ‘champions’, and right staffing is critical: people who are willing and able to listen and support each other.
- There is continual collaborative work required to match the vision of the LDM agreement with the strategic development required on the ground to reach these objectives. Continuing to update and review LDM agreements must help to refine the commitments of government partners supporting local organisations.
- Language and culture programs must grow organically from the grass roots. Support from government for this is not always easily forthcoming.
- Anindilyakwa people have many kin and ancestral connections beyond the archipelago. However, the governance work of LDM on the Groote Archipelago, concerns only the archipelago and the one language group which resides there. A strong cohesive independent Anindilyakwa population will, in the long term work more productively with other first nations groups on the mainland.



What we did

In the Groote Archipelago, CDU Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation research was guided and authorised by the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC). Through conversations with both DCMC regional staff and the ALC, it was agreed that this Ground Up research would form part of a range of monitoring and evaluation projects being conducted by the ALC as a commitment within the LDM Agreement, 2018.

The CDU researcher initially held conversations with DCMC regional staff around the scope of the research. These were then shared with the ALC Legal & Executive Operations Manager who spoke with ALC board members. It was agreed that the appropriate focus for the M&E research would be the 6 LDM implementation areas currently being actioned through the ALC LDM agreement: Housing, Economic Development, Education, Law and Justice, Local Government and Health.

The CDU researcher pursued inquiries around potential local researcher involvement with the ALC Anthropologist and Legal and Executive Operations Manager. It was considered most appropriate in this case, for local leaders involved in LDM to speak on this directly to a neutral party, rather than having the research mediated by Anindilyakwa speaking researchers.

From 4-7th April 2021, a series of unstructured and semi-structured interview discussions were carried out with individuals and groups associated with each of the Groote LDM strategic areas:

- Housing – Anindilyakwa Housing Association Corporation: Cherelle Wurrawilya (AHAC Chair) and Serena Bara (AHAC staff) and Peter Finney (AHAC General Manager)
- Economic Development – Anindilyakwa Land Council: Mark Hewitt (ALC CEO), Mark Hautop (ALC Legal and Executive Operations Manager), Colin Wakefield (ALC Royalty Development Unit Manager)

- Education – Groote Eylandt Bickerton Island Primary College Aboriginal Corporation: Ida Mamarika (GEBIPCAC Chair), Elaine Mamarika and Milly Mamarika (local language workers and authorities), Josie Skelton and Kevin Gillan (GEBIPCAC)
- Law and Justice – Peacemakers Group: Cherelle Wurrawilya, Linda Mamarika, Elaine Mamarika, Judy Esther Bara, Roderick Mamarika, Naomi Wurramara and Hugh Bland (ALC Anthropologist)
- Health – Warnumamalya Health Services Aboriginal Corporation (WHASAC) directors: Louisa Amagula, Mikalya Bain-Buckle, Elliott Bara, Rita Bara, Helen Lalara, Rosalie Lalara, Colleen Mamarika, Neil Mamarika, Phillip Mamarika, Selina Maminyamania, Helen Nundhirribala, Alex Mewrie Walit, Kieronson Wurramara, Marissa Wurramara, Jennifer Yantarrnga
- Local Government: Thomas Amagula (ALC Deputy Chair) and Elliot Bara (ALC Board Member and former EARC Local Councillor)

Collation and interpretation of this interview material was subsequently undertaken by the CDU research team while preparing this report; this included a review of available ALC LDM agreements and identification of key themes emerging from the interview responses.

This community report was returned to the participants and the ALC for comment and finalised after receiving their approval.

LDM in the Groote Archipelago

The Groote Archipelago is situated off the east coast of Arnhem Land, and includes Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, as well as other small surrounding islands. The archipelago is Aboriginal land, with land ownership formally granted to its Anindilyakwa traditional owners under the NT Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1976).



Peacemakers Group (left to right): Cherelle Wurrawilya, Linda Mamarika, Elaine Mamarika, Judy Esther Bara, Roderick Mamarika, and Naomi Wurramara.

Anindilyakwa is the local language spoken by the 14 land owning clans of the archipelago. Recognising their close connection with other Aboriginal clans through songlines extending beyond the Groote Archipelago, in relation to local governance, enterprise development and decision making, Anindilyakwa leaders are focussed on a vision of One People, One Language and One Archipelago. They celebrate the mostly productive history of engagements with Macassans and have a cultural memory of the unifying efforts of the mission which started one hundred years ago.

Today, the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) operates as an independent statutory authority representing the traditional owners and providing services to the three main communities of Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra as well as other outstations/satellite towns. Over the last decade, the ALC has worked closely with Anindilyakwa people, clan groups and organisations to move beyond an economy reliant on welfare and royalties from Groote Eylandt's GEMCO manganese mine.

When talking about Local Decision Making (LDM), many Anindilyakwa leaders point to the ALC 'Future Groote Strategic Plan' (2012 – 2027) as a founding document which lays out aspirations for the Archipelago, and which they see current work with government as continuing to support. The 15 year strategic plan laid out a process for transitioning from a royalty reliant local

economy, to a vision of economic self-sustainability for Groote. The plan was developed through an extensive consultation process and refers back to trade between Anindilyakwa and Macassans, as the point in history where Anindilyakwa worked through their own strong and independent entrepreneurialism to ensure a vibrant and productive life for future generations.

When the LDM policy was announced in 2018, the ALC wrote to the NT Gunner government requesting the formation of an LDM agreement, which was signed on 14 November 2018. This was then followed by a series of implementation plans:

- 19 June 2019 – Housing, Economic Development and Law, Justice and Rehabilitation Implementation plans
- 30 April 2020 – Education Implementation Plan

The Groote Eylandt LDM Agreement outlines a set of priority areas to be focussed on in the short, medium and long term, maintaining and strengthening strong local leadership of Anindilyakwa people while transitioning to community controlled services delivery in identified areas, developing a prosperous future for emerging generations and maintaining harmonious and productive relationships with government.

In each of the key focus areas, there have been significant changes and development since 2018 (see Appendix 4 for full details). These priority areas have required the formation of

new key organisations connected with the ALC, but which work through their own boards and governance structures. This includes:

- Anindilyakwa Housing Association Corporation (AHAC) which is functioning as a nationally accredited housing provider, employing local people, managing government contracts for local tenancy management and repairs and maintenance, and a linchpin in the agreed outcome to establish and run a single system of community controlled remote housing on the Groote Archipelago.
- Groote Holdings Aboriginal Corporation (GHAC) whose role is to support and progress major projects that are being facilitated through LDM, such as the Winchelsea Mine, aquaculture projects and Little Paradise development.
- Groote Eylandt Bickerton Island Primary College Aboriginal Corporation (GEBIPCAC) whose Board is emerging as a clan and moiety based representative body developing an integrated bilingual education system across the Archipelago with one joint school council, and new curricula, staffing and the construction of a new independent primary boarding school on Bickerton Island supporting community-led education.
- A range of groups focussed on integrated reshaping of community justice possibilities on Groote, including through the Peacemaker's program, and the development of a Community Justice Group model for implementation through the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, and work towards the construction of a locally controlled alternative to custody facility at Marble Point.
- The Warnumamalya Health Services Aboriginal Corporation (WHASAC) has been established to advise NT Health on local health outcomes and eventually oversee the transition of community health services to a local health board.
- The ALC and local leaders are preparing the way for the establishment of a new Anindilyakwa run Local Council devolved from the East Arnhem Regional Council.



Local Evaluative Responses

In the Groote Archipelago, research took the form of unstructured or semi-structured discussions with elders, board members, ALC staff and staff associated with the various implementation plans of the LDM agreement. Research was focussed on their experiences of being involved in the LDM process, outcomes arising and what good local decision making means to them.

Particular themes were identified as recurring, and these are detailed below with significant or often repeated direct quotes from interviews. The themes cut across different LDM strategic areas which are sometimes identified: Housing, Education, Law and Justice, Local Government, Economic Development, and Health.

LDM shows the government is starting to recognise the strong leadership that was always there...

- “ Our memories go back to the old days and gets the spirit of great grandmothers. Want that to be heard, want that to come out. When government come and stand here we'll have that voice from them grow. Feel them here, visit great grandfather grave, show them it's always behind us here
- “ We took the opportunity with the Gunner government to take up local decision making agreements, because we could see an opportunity to get them to focus on those elements of our Strategic Plan, which we always knew we had to, to roll it out.
- “ Lucky that LDM came along? Not really lucky. The hard work of Tony Wurramarrba [ALC Chair] means he deserves something. He was always going back and forward asking for something and his family got it. I'm a big believer of him and what he has done. Now I take responsibility and do it for him.

... and this flows down to a positive effect on community governance and cohesion.

- “ Every decision made must come from us, so people see this and can support and follow us. It makes things easier. We know who we are. Is very different with other places around us, we know who we are.
- “ We've been seeing a lot of changes [around housing]. Maintenance reporting was pretty flat. But people have started hopping onto social media, now that maintenance requests going to us. So many requests, people are saying AHAC is getting things done. Now some people send photo, send to tenancy office, we send someone to help. (Housing)
- “ Everything the peacemakers do, is to quieten down the arguments. Community have seen us doing this. If talk to them, show respect towards us. They can see us. (Law and Justice)
- “ Lot of changes been happening since LDM came in. Health, Justice, Housing, Education. Want to have a pathway for our future, make sure the young people know where they are and we have a steady purpose for them. LDM – keep it moving, make sure stays strong.

- “ Everyone is talking about what is happening here with housing. People are trying to do the same in other areas, and they come and visit us. Travel to lots of conferences and share the story (Housing)
- “ People from outside want us to go and visit. We are learning from people in Central and they are learning from us. Yuendumu been doing that for a long time – attending disputes, but law and justice group is after the dispute. (Law and Justice)
- “ Got a really, really good team. Our mindset is about business, economic development, don't want our children to suffer.

LDM allows us to think and act through traditional ways, focussing on our Archipelago identity...

- “ For us it is easy, we are on the island, it is easy to bring satellite towns in. Here everyone makes decision and move forward. Here we all speak up and try to make better change and living. We always listen to Traditional Owners and have consultation.
- “ Local decision is easy for us to understand, it's a big change and easier way communicating with each other. Do things in our community how we want, we are looking forward to this.
- “ We are standing on our own two feet, be who we are.
- “ We know who to speak to. It's easy to get in the same room, and make sure we have the right people to talk to.
- “ We are businesspeople, do a lot of economic development. Use money wisely, creating jobs, educating children as number 1 key for successful time to come. Always going back to our people to stand strong, and our mining company won't be here forever. (Economic Development)

...and we are looking forward to this leading to change in local government arrangements

- “ Was always link and trade as Aboriginal people but dividing into two council we want to propose own local government.
- “ When you ask for something at East Arnhem Shire council, it goes around in a circle. If we now have this local council, this is what we have to move to. Very important think about all things – having a meeting talking up to Nhulunbuy. Have our own meeting. So can decide our own Archipelago. (Local Government)
- “ Having council will build respect. People would turn up, people come at the moment for money, but not for other reason. People should be interested and attend meetings, can communicate with old people to have this or that in our region.

“ Local government part of the LDM agreement has been the hardest. East Arnhem Regional Council fought it and fought it. [We] travelled to Gove and sat with Yolŋu leaders. I said stop talking about 'shire'. I turned to that old man (my wife's uncle) I said: You take that Shire hat off. What we discussed, everyone agreed we would go independently.

“ All services put into our own vision. Put Anindilyakwa instead of East Arnhem and ALC, so our services can work together. There are many services that East Arnhem doesn't deliver. Will have more employment.

“ Now with government, establish things you need, they will have it happen. Been struggling for Local Authority, now government are supporting us. We have had to push it. Never been rest. Ask so much of those guys to get message through to government. Government now are being flexible, listening to chairman.

LDM helps us to maintain our commitment to traditional Anindilyakwa land and education: we raise a child to be their Anindilyakwa self ...

“ When we talk about kids, are not talking about one child. Every child matters. Need people to be who they are. Need to stand up on their feet and talk. Kids to achieve, be who they are, being proud of themselves as young leader.

“ Need people to be here when they are finished [their jail sentence] instead of someone being on parole in Darwin. When they are there, they will get bored, do something and go back in there again. Boys are missing out on funerals. So many things are better to be here (Law and Justice)

“ Justice camp will be good. Have to go and learn, have to go and help them. Some people might come back angry. Need plans for them. Tell them we need you guys, feed them with good things. Sometimes when they get all built up in head and go for fight. Need them to be clear and empty, not head full. Need to help them come back into Groote life (Law and Justice)

“ We have one ancestor and we all come from there. Not the same for whitefellas, you just focus on close family, yes? We are everyone. All people together, the extended family and the place. Working in health and in school to see that happening where children are proud and recognised. So, others can support us and recognise. See what was happening before and come back to that. That child needs to become themselves.

“ So, what is happened now is that we've finished the bilingual curriculum, but the schools are not ready to have it. But the current principal has agreed that the school needs to do a lot of work. The thing we have done is we employ consultants to do a teacher trainer to do an Anindilyakwa teacher and principal induction to see how you teach our kids (Education)

... while keeping our Anindilyakwa language strong into the future for politics and agreement making

“ What I didn't like about working for East Arnhem Council, was we would get left behind. Yolŋu would get something again and again, but we would wait for years. The Yolŋu would talk their language and we didn't understand

“ If we get our own Local Council here, my people will support me. Will make one decision, one language.

“ We have locals, when people come can talk in language. We know their situation. Who to talk to if is a problem. Worked really well in satellite communities (Housing)

“ Because we are people with such first language no matter what, we have kinship, culture never dies

... and supporting our traditional law and justice...

“ Takes time, depends on their feelings, their choice to come and join us. We negotiate, sit with families together – know which families to invite when becomes a big issue, find a way to make peace. The police were not there at the right time, we are the people that deal with the problem first. Amazing thing to see the work. See people going from being angry to hugging and crying (Law and Justice)

“ Sometimes we find it hard with the police – we don't have any good relations with them. Not only when is big fighting from community, but sometimes can be elsewhere. (Law and Justice)

“ Peacemakers should go and see other organisations about peacemaking works. Trying to get people in the middle sorting probs out. Instead of using weapons, they use words, talk more and find things out, do what we can. (Law and Justice)

LDM supports co-design and co-delivery of services through an Anindilyakwa vision. We can see the full picture of what is needed and how to connect resources properly

“ Now GEBIE, AHAC, NTG, Angurugu will come under one umbrella. People just come one office, everyone just come here. People can just pick up the phone and call if is a problem; or see our shirts. (Housing)

“ We have been designing houses around what can be different and suit our lives. All about culturally appropriate housing – layout of house, interaction between family and who might be living there. Separate entrances and bathroom entrances and access so don't have to cross pathway. Whenever we start new things, we wish for culture to be there. (Housing)

“ New people come in local people, and we support with on the job training. For maintenance work can get up to Cert IV do all here. We tap into any available training through ALC, CDP. This is the best for us. (Housing)

“ Focus at the moment is to do inspection, get an understanding of housing stock, what can be upgraded. Go back to government and show what we can be doing – much easier if we do it our way. (Housing)

“ Major thing out of contract is houses beyond economical repair. [NTG] looked at Room to Breathe program and home build program but didn't take into account existing housing stock beyond repair. (Housing)

“ Before royalties went into pocket and old people had pocket with a hole in it. And in 2007 we started work on that, 2012 put in 15 year future plan. (Economic development)



AHAC housing management (left to right): Cherelle Wurrawilya, Peter Finney, Serena Bara

The importance of flexibility. We work to resolve tensions between visions of the LDM agreement documents and what is supported on the ground and in government

“ Some of the wording [in the LDM agreement document] is conflicting. There is nothing in the document that says what people need to do. (Education)

“ It seems there is a piece of paper that no-one actually has any authority over even though the signatories from the department and the minister and ALC don't do what we want, or members of the department are saying what if GEBIEPAC doesn't do this, and there are heaps of risks in that no-one actually know who we are reporting to in the document. (Education)

“ Standard contract for repairs and maintenance. Repairs are not remote housing specific. Won't budge on that at the moment. Not a lot of flexibility. Don't have ability to move quickly. (Housing)

“ The issue isn't good will on the part of NTG staff, but the legislative arrangements and cultures that are there, these need to always be negotiated. (Education)

“ Having a dedicated contact would be very helpful. We do work with one of the senior guys in DIPL – he is hard to tie-down because he's very busy. Is the general manager for DIPL. This is great because he can make things happen, but we've also got to catch him. Someone who is solely dedicated to local decision making as part of contract, who is across the issues, would be helpful. Come over a few times, understand. Sit across the table. (Housing)



GEBIEPCAC bilingual curriculum development (left to right): Ida Mamarika and Millie Mamarika

Local Leaders' Statements



Thomas Amagula and how focusing on the one Archipelago suggests certain strategies for making strong futures for young people

“ I remember when we were running our own community before the shire came, and now we are listening to someone in Gove. But the decision we make on our community is what it is about. There was always links and trade between Aboriginal people, but we want to propose own local government. One voice, one governance body. We are one people, want one voice to deliver something for our land. Within the boundaries of Groote Archipelago, we work as one people for our next generation. The [Anindilyakwa Land Council] strategic plan wasn't about us, was about next generation. Want to get it right for our kids to have sustainable future. ”



Jennifer Yantarrnga on working through LDM to shape services more aligned with how young people can be raised to be who they are

“ Every child matters, and all children matter. We have one ancestor and we all come from there. Not the same for whitefellas, you just focus on close family, yes? We are everyone. All people together, the extended family and the place. Working in health and in school to see that happening where children are proud and recognised. So, others can support us and recognise. See what was happening before and come back to that. That child needs to become themselves.. ”



Cherelle Wurrawilya on LDM as services which operate as an extension of existing networks of kin country and language

“ In the white world people come and go. But we were born and raised here, live our lives on our land and we die here. No-one will take this away from us. Kinship will be passed on and on and never go. We are here to make that change for outside to see, and they can follow us too. Other groups are looking to AHAC, we are at the front for community housing. We are locals, when people come to ask about their house, they can talk in language. We understand, we know their situation, and who to talk to if there is a problem. It's worked really well in our communities and in the satellite communities. ”



Elliot Bara on creating a new local council as a means for both Anindilyakwa people and government to connect with original Anindilyakwa authority

“ Having [our own local] council will build respect. People would turn up. People come at the moment for money, but not for other reason. People should be interested and attend meetings, can communicate with old people to have this or that in our region. Government and politician will want more people, so they can see we are strong. They won't say yes [to decisions] if there are just a few of us. This is what they want to see, so they can support us. But if see more than 70-80 will look good for government. They will send more funding. Will support us when we see them.. ”

Local Leaders' Statements



Elaine Mamarika on ways that LDM is supporting both women and men to work from their roles, in growing vibrant communities

“Ladies are backbone for the men. We need men's safe house as well as women's safe house. I see a lot of things happening for women all the time, but want strong men too – want a strong men's program. We don't know what they do, they do carving space, but we need help for the men. Like women have help. Get together to talk about issues together, about community.”



Ida Mamarika on bilingual curriculum development as important for growing futures connected to land for all people

“Our Bilingual Curriculum is very important for our Anindilyakwa wurriyukwayuwa so that they walk and see in two worlds. We need our kids to be confident to read and write in Anindilyakwa and in English as they are our future. We don't want to lose our precious culture.”

Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1

LDM as creating the working governance arrangements of 'One Archipelago'

Previously, when seeking to establish a unique and sustainable economic future for the Groote Archipelago, the ALC and Anindilyakwa people have needed to respond to the interests and jurisdictions of external stakeholders – government, non-government and industry.

Through LDM, they are now actively working to re-design working relationships with government and other partners so that governance and investment is all centred around a vision of 'one archipelago'.

“ We are one people, and we want one voice to deliver something for our land. We are one language, one family. We have connection to mainland. I have Yolŋu family, but within boundaries of Groote Archipelago we work as one people for our next generation. ”

“ We have one ancestor and we all come from there. Not the same for whitefellas... We are everyone. All people together, the extended family and the place. Working in health and in school to see that happening where children are proud and recognised. ”

This is a specific choice and opportunity available when working with one geographic area, and one language group with already established processes for integrated working of all 14 clans in managing royalty distribution.

It allows for precise and well-articulated forms of local governance, in which different local organisations are beginning to work differently with funding and assets available to deliver services which are more sensible on the ground, better aligned with Anindilyakwa culture and ways of raising children, and which work through connections of kin and place.

In the process, this work has hit up against particular limitations within government bureaucracies revealing important locations for change within government practices to be able to engage effectively with the emerging local governance arrangements of the Groote Archipelago.

CASE STUDY 2

Local housing management for 'One Archipelago'

The Anindilyakwa Housing Association (AHAC) now manages between 300-350 houses and is one of the largest community housing providers in the NT. They are managed by an Anindilyakwa board of directors and employ mostly local staff. They have worked with the Dept of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) in taking over housing maintenance contracts, and with Territory Families in taking over tenancy management.

“ We are now taking over all NTG houses – slowly, slowly. We have around 20 people working here. We manage the communities and manage satellite towns as well. It will be much easier when we have tenure. Everything is coming to us now, as it should be. ”

“ Focus at the moment is to do inspection, get understanding of housing stock, what can be upgraded. Go back to government and show what can be doing – much easier if we do it our way. ”

“ If have funding for housing in government – don't control the bucket. Give to us. We can show how to spend. How much goes to satellite community and how much elsewhere. We want control passed, to be there and respond – help push things forward. ”

Working with a 'one archipelago' approach to housing means that local decisions can be made around best allocation of funding, and best management of available assets. This includes decisions about how to balance expenditure between towns and satellite communities; and how to best manage 46 houses that would have been deemed 'beyond repair' by NTG, but which could be dealt with differently through integrated work between AHAC and the Civil and Construction arm of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Enterprises.

Key areas where this would be further enabled by government include:

- A dedicated contact person within NTG Department, other than a member of the senior executive, who has time to spend on the ground and can support continuity and ease of engagement whilst remaining connected to higher levels of government.
- Development of 'hybrid' Repairs and Maintenance contracts which are more specific to the needs of remote housing management.

CASE STUDY 3

Bilingual education for 'One Archipelago'

The Groote Eylandt Bickerton Island Primary College Aboriginal Corporation (GEBIPCAC) is now supporting transition to a joint school council managing the re-development of bilingual education across the Archipelago, including through the establishment of an independent primary boarding college – Wurriyukwayuwa-Langwa College.

“ We know that the kids, if they're put in the right environment, with care, with nutrition, and good routine, they will go to school. We took it on to build our own residential boarding house in the location outside of the existing three communities where they'd be standalone, have a good routine. And that's on Bickerton Island. ”

“ There used to be bilingual in all schools, now don't know what happened. We wanted curriculum to be on the Island – in 3-4 schools. Children can care for country. Going on country catching a fish, this is maths. Going to country this is science. ”

Working from long term experience growing up Anindilyakwa children and supporting teaching and learning processes suitable for future generations of strong Anindilyakwa people, senior women working on the GEBIPCAC board and through the Anindilyakwa Language Centre are bringing about significant changes in how education is structured and coordinated across the Archipelago. This includes through development of key elements of an online bilingual curriculum, and locally led design of Wurriyukwayuwa-Langwa College infrastructure and devolving individual councils in schools across the Archipelago to make way for a joint school council in line with an interest in Archipelago-wide school management.

Key areas where this would be further enabled by government include:

- Continued support for convening a joint school council
- Ongoing support and resourcing for the training and certification of Anindilyakwa teaching staff who can lead bilingual curriculum teaching (e.g. growing a focus within the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (program for training of Anindilyakwa teachers to teach Anindilyakwa children)

What's working? What needs more work?

	What's working?	What needs more work?
Self determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One People, One Archipelago approach. Extensive Planning for future (e.g. 15 year Strategic Plan). Anindilyakwa people on boards and in jobs within organisations directed towards their own future. Strong connections between senior leaders, ALC and affiliated corporations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacities to support both ways education and governance in meaningful ways. Teaching training and support adequate to developing and actively providing bilingual education. More support for 'peacemakers' as their role and influence grows.
Place-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry partnerships aligned with Anindilyakwa history of trade and enterprise. Integration of services design and delivery and asset management in a 'one archipelago' approach identifying visible gaps, and allowing local funding allocations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realistic expectations on the part of government agencies as they engage with newly emerging organisations. Ongoing support and collaboration around On-country 'justice camps'. Place-based school curriculum and teacher education. Dedicated NTG contact – offering both high level access and easy access.
Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with DIPL and Territory Families around transition to locally managed tenancy and Repairs & Maintenance contracts. Amendment of Local Government Act to enable devolution of local groups from Regional Councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing review of LDM documents to retain as living documents. Suitable/ hybrid repairs and maintenance contracts. Integrated DoE commitment to bilingual education goals.
Co-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private/industry partnerships supporting housing development, Aquaculture, Little Paradise and Winchelsea mine developments. GEBIPAC coordination of Independent Boarding School design. Integrated management of community housing services and ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private/industry partnerships supporting housing development, Aquaculture, Little Paradise and Winchelsea mine developments. GEBIPAC coordination of Independent Boarding School design. Integrated management of community housing services and ownership.
Community control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive to economic independence through private investment. Broad involvement of all clan groups and many local leaders across multiple boards and organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition to an Anindilyakwa local council. Strong men's group and male participation in education and peacemaking.

Ground Up LDM M&E Framework

Background

Across the NT, all places with LDM agreements are unique and constituted through their own ancestral networks, histories of colonisation and contemporary concerns, governance and aspirations.

In maintaining these ancestral and contemporary networks of kin and authority in working with government, there are specific relationships between local people and government staff and agencies that are emerging or coming back to life. Traditional monitoring and evaluation is always at work within these collaborations, as elders guide government workers in developing ways of working together for better futures for emerging generations.

Ground Up monitoring and evaluation – which works under the authority of local elders to rehearse old and new stories which reflect and enhance the strength of local governance in collaboration with NTG – opens up ways in which government staff may become sensitised and better able to work in meaningful collaboration around needs and interests on the ground.

By drawing on the work of this project, we outline a logic and protocol for ongoing M&E engagement on these terms which may be of benefit supporting ongoing M&E at existing, and other LDM sites.

About this framework

Working with local researchers under the guidance of their elders in a range of sites we learnt in each place that the claims made in the evaluation of the NTG's Local Decision Making agreements followed a particular three-stage logic.

Originary Stories

Behind everything, and often up front, there were stories of where the community had come from, how it had come into existence, and the ways in which its histories inform and guide the ways in which politics and governance should be undertaken into the future. These originary stories included constant reference to visitors and settlers, missions and government and non-government agencies.

Local theories of growing healthy people - places in collaboration with govt.

Working with those originary stories, the key Aboriginal contributors to the research then pointed out the complex networks of kin, clans, organisations and places which emerged from and were made possible or visible by their history, and which were often unknown or unrecognised by conventional government practices.

Local decision makers were also keenly aware of the networks of government agencies, places, processes and public servants with whom they work, particularly those individuals and agencies they see as supporting and contributing to local decision making.

Strategies for working together

Then, in celebrating what were generally seen as the positive effects of the Local Decision Making agreements and practices, community members identify the ways in which LDM made more visible, supported, and strengthened those networks of care and accountability in both the local culture and the government culture.

In this M&E work, the focus was much more upon supporting emerging and healthy networks than upon identifying, isolating and solving individual problems.

And further, the M&E work of storytelling and making visible was seen actually to contribute to and strengthen the process of Local Decision Making and was not something standing apart.

Engaging Ground Up M&E within LDM

ORIGINARY STORIES	
Our experience	<p>In every location where we worked the senior people began by carefully reiterating the histories of their people-places and how they arrived at their current situation. (This setting-the-scene through storytelling is quite consistent with all First Nations politics and governance throughout Australia.)</p> <p>The stories provided the framework for articulating the arrangements and processes on the ground which will be most profitable in collaborations with government.</p>
Suggested approach	<p>Listen for the ways in which current decision making strategies are couched in the story of how we came to be where we are now. This will allow you to identify the key networks, historical connections, actors, values and aspirations as you discuss the progress of agreement making and implementation. Local decision makers also expect you to identify the relevant networks or accountability and responsibility in the cultures of government. Sometimes the connection between the originary stories and the imperatives of government service delivery are unclear. Discerning the connections is important collaborative work.</p>
Examples	<p>Local researchers in Ngukurr considered it important to begin by visiting the most senior elder in Ngukurr – Walter Rogers – before approaching anyone else. When asked about LDM, Walter Rogers immediately started talking about a previous important agreement: the agreement between the clans when they moved to the mission. This alerted the team to LDM as a continuation of this previous negotiation and agreement, and how for local elders it is also accountable in the same terms.</p> <p>When sitting in the Jawoyn Association office and talking about local decision making, every board member who participated in the M&E discussions pointed to the native title certificates framed on the wall and said, 'That is local decision making.' This alerted the researchers to this significant agreement and the particular relationships with government that were enabled at that point, and how these relationships are being maintained, but also changed in specific ways, through LDM at the moment.</p>

LOCAL THEORIES OF GROWING HEALTHY PEOPLE-PLACES IN COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENT

Our experience

In every location the senior people emphasised the networks of people, places, organisations and services which LDM strengthens. These networks may be invisible to government workers and stakeholders who may then mis-identify problems and prosecute solutions which work from a deficit model.

Suggested Approach

Focus on identifying and acknowledging the networks through which services are, or can be, co-designed and implemented, both on the ground, and within government. Each story which points to a problem in local decision making, draws attention, sometimes implicitly, to a network of care and concern which has been ignored or unseen by outsiders, and to which networks of care and concern in government are able to respond.

Examples

In Alice Springs, when people often pointed to the importance of Town campers speaking up and talking in their own languages when participating in meetings with government, they were also always pointing to the important networks of kin and relationships that accompany this language speaking and which connect families, remote places and Town Camps.

In Groote Eylandt, when talking about housing, there were continual references to the management of housing both in the communities and in satellite towns. It was important for housing staff to move between these areas, and to support good housing equally in both communities and satellite towns. This points to important networks of homeland places still being maintained alongside and in connection with mission towns, and how the networks of these places are helping to produce healthy and happy people.

STRATEGIES FOR WORKING TOGETHER

Our experience	<p>Local participants focus upon monitoring and evaluating the visibility and strength of these networks and the ways particular service delivery cultures and co-designs can enhance or undermine them. In that sense they are not primarily 'problem oriented' in their M&E work.</p> <p>This is entirely consistent with ancestral practices of celebrating the joy and vibrancy of contemporary life in terms of ancestral songs and stories.</p>
Suggested Approach	<p>When issues are identified in the process of M&E, local decision makers enjoy most success when they negotiate ways in which existing networks of people and organisations can be assisted to address these problems, and be strengthened in the process. Evaluation includes finding ways to celebrate the validity and effectiveness of these networks.</p>
Examples	<p>In Ngukurr, the issue of the management of the oval was also an issue of breakdown in communication between the Shire, Traditional Owners group and Yugul Mangi. Supporting these networks to reconnect will also support the good management of the oval, and young people playing football. It will also become evidence of good LDM outcomes.</p> <p>In Alice Springs, elders telling stories of failed rubbish collection in Town Camps, were also telling stories of historical ruptures in networks of services support in Town Camps, and ways LDM was helping to address these issues now. Addressing the need for rubbish collection that happens without Town Campers needing to call a large number of different organisations, also helps to build good networks of organisational communication and strong communities, and network government agencies and workers to respond more effectively to LDM.</p> <p>On Groote, gaining some control over work areas around housing was seen as a way of restoring the rightful balance between the larger and smaller communities, as well as making possible productive decisions about housing stock deemed unrecoverable by some government or nongovernment agencies.</p>

Recommendations for public servants

1. Continue to pay attention to the stories from the ground which tell of the origins of the local people-places and which frame the structures and practices of Local Decision Making.
2. Where possible make these stories, structures and practices visible (by helping documentation, making public and celebrating) as they unfold day to day.
3. As you think of your own work in terms of the structures, practices and culture of the public service, help to make the histories, structures and practices evident to local decision makers.
4. Continue to mold and support the development of public service culture day by day, project by project, to attend and respond specifically to the practices and culture of local decision making on the ground.
5. Remember the continuing imperative of 'growing up healthy new generations'. Find opportunities to involve young people, encourage them to witness good collaborative decision making involving their elders and government workers, and where possible support their engagement as local researchers.

Appendix 1: Ngukurr

Overview of YMDAC LDM agreement priority areas and achievements.

(As excerpted from the Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation Local Decision Making Implementation Plan 2021 – 2023)

Agreement 1 – 2018-2020 LDM MAP Implementation Plan	
Priority Areas	Business Development & Contracting
	Local Jobs and Training
	Community-Based Service Delivery
Strategic Enablers	Capacity Building
	MAP Implementation and Resourcing
	Effective Communication and Engagement

Agreement 2 – 2021-2023 LDM MAP Agreement	
Priority Areas	Cultural Strength and Respect
	Governance and Capacity
	Community Wellbeing
	Economic Empowerment
	Local Jobs for Local People

Achievements: 2018 – 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YMDAC have tendered for R&M and Tenancy Management contracts in Ngukurr and Urapunga under Single Select Tender. A three-year select tender contract for the delivery of maintenance and upgrades to sections of the Roper Highway and Numbulwar Road. Inclusion of YMDAC services into Government awarded contracts, including the new multi-million dollar Ngukurr Police Station. Asset management including equipment maintained, registered, insured and operational. Support to develop a Work Health and Safety Plan and other management plans supportive of YMDAC Civil Construction Enterprise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DIPL including YMDAC in tendering documents ensured tenderers received an equal opportunity to sub-contract YMDAC. Concrete provision for the Ngukurr Police station resulted in local employment and over \$500,000 in profit (used to construct the YMDAC administration building). YMDAC have an aspiration for building new houses to help drive local employment and local Aboriginal trades. They have approached NTG for support. The CDP transitioned to YMDAC under a Joint Venture with a further \$3.7m turnover Grants provided to assist with education and skills training programs to support civil works projects. Civil training and operator tickets achieved.

- Focused on entering into Aged Care and have a block of land under Section 19 lease that we are working in partnership of ITEC Health to develop into a community controlled aged care facility.
- YMDAC have applied through NLC for section 19 for the Cemetery.
- YMDAC have applied through NLC for Section 19 for the Ngukurr football oval.
- Awarding of the Youth Diversion contract for Ngukurr and Minyerri.
- YMDAC are delivering the Intensive Family Support Service and Domestic Violence programs.
- YMDAC are tendering for the new Family Support Service and Child and Family Intensive Support (CaFIS).
- Construction of the Language Centre Accommodation
- Substantial growth of YMDAC over the past 2 years (from \$4.5m turnover to \$9m turnover)
- YMDAC controls the Ngukurr Store with a turnover of \$7m
- Positive working relationships with partners.
- YMDAC Strategic Plan – completed.
- YMDAC Business Plan – completed.
- Integrated management systems installed across the organisation.
- Support provided for initial employment of a Business Manager to support YMDAC businesses.
- Support for the investigational study of educational and social strategies for Yugul Mangi people.
- Assistance in gaining access to increased funding through NIAA
- Stability of the organisation through retention of staff and key management.

YMDAC appreciated Local Decision Making, it is driving changes to the fabric of Ngukurr. We have felt empowered by the process with real success including:

- Development of the YMDAC Business Plan and Strategic Plans • Shift in focus from Government to listen to community • Increased opportunity for locally driven programs (social, cultural, justice, economic, employment, housing)
- Recognition of our Local Decision Making Board • Increased employment opportunities for local people • Increased capacity for YMDAC as it grows in ability to deliver • Focus on Quality Management Systems and IMS • Improved participation and empowerment of the YMDAC Board of Directors • Flow on effects in community well-being through effective culturally appropriate programs

Appendix 2: Alice Springs Town Camps

Overview of Tangentyere Council LDM agreement priority areas and outcomes.

(As excerpted from the Tangentyere LDM Agreement and Schedules 2020)

THE TOWN CAMPER WELLNESS FRAMEWORK

The Town Camper Wellness Framework is the overall balance within the Town Camp and impacts on the wellness of each individual living there. Local Agendas are being developed for each of the 16 Town Camps through extensive consultation by TCAC via a survey tool based on the Town Camper Wellness Framework, a service and stakeholder mapping and safety mapping.

WELLNESS DOMAIN

OUTCOME SOUGHT

Shelter and Housing	Control of the basic elements needed to live a long and healthy life, including stable and healthy housing and financial and occupational wellness
Keeping our country	Positive and thriving interactions between individuals and their 'habitats' at a local, community and global level, and are safe in nature, home, work and the community.
Community	A united community with robust and flourishing relationships and connections with families and others.
Healing mind, body and soul	Town Campers' physical, developmental, psychosocial and mental health needs are met in a culturally safe and appropriate system, which includes access to preventative measures, health education and services to redress emerging health issues.
Knowledge	Equitable access and relevant opportunities in formal and informal experiences in the classroom, at home and in community, for all Town Campers from early learning, schooling and adult education.
Community Leadership	Strong engagement with peers and community, including governance and decision-making, determining systems and actively having a say on matters that affect Town Campers directly and indirectly.
Identity	Strong sense of self and culture amongst Town Campers and collectively working towards eliminating racism and systematic discrimination.

OUTCOMES 2020-2021

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Execution of a formal LDM Heads of Agreement in 2020 with the NT Government and supported by the Commonwealth through the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). ● Successful development of local researchers undertaking the surveys in town camps.
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WELLNESS DOMAIN

Shelter and Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working Group established ● Transition of consolidated Municipal and Essential Services (MES) on Alice Springs Town Camps to TCAC for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2023. ● Extension of the contract for the provision of property management services in Alice Springs Town Camps between DLGHCD and Tangentyere Constructions until 30 June 2023. ● Sonwane Pty Ltd Trustee for Tangentyere Charitable No.2 awarded select tender for remote housing maintenance services for Alice Springs Town Camps for 22 months from DIPL. ● TCAC ISO 9001:2015 accreditation maintained ● CAAHC accreditation maintained under national regulatory system for community housing providers ● Builder's Licence: 14341CR CAL accredited for urban & remote area work No. 14121
Keeping our country	Working Group established
Community	Working Group established
Healing mind, body and soul	
Knowledge	Working Group established
Community Leadership	
Identity	

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Transition of consolidated Municipal and Essential Services (MES) on Alice Springs Town Camps to TCAC for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2023.

Consolidation of all Municipal and Essential Services (MES) on the Alice Springs Town Camps has been an aspiration of individual and corporate TCAC members since the ASTP. This is evident both through the Town Camp Wellness Surveys and Town Camp Annual General Meetings (AGMs). The transition of these services to TCAC is a positive outcome for LDM, allowing decisions generated in built environment master planning sessions to be immediately actioned. For example, TCAC identified a range of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) issues that require amelioration and/or mitigation, some of which were within the scope of its existing service delivery. Those that were not were able to be adopted by a third-party provider. MES is one example of a service delivery outcome that benefits from and strengthens LDM ensuring stronger accountability and better reporting mechanisms.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS [Post-2020]

- As an outcome of LDM consultation processes, the new Child and Family Centre mobilises a Tangentyere model identified as suitable by Town Camp residents, and which includes new positions for local staff.
- There has been the creation a new Youth Development Model which draws on LDM consultations and is enabled through collaborations between Territory Families and Tangentyere. This has been funded as a pilot project and supports increased programs in Town Camps and further new local positions.
- Implementation of strategies under the Knowledge Wellness have seen the Department of Education subcontracting Tangentyere to deliver Commonwealth funded programs providing after hours school based support and employing senior teachers working with young people.
- The expansion of access to the Tangentyere's Women's Safety Online Training Program has been enabled by a commitment of the NT Government recommending all Central Australian NTG staff to undertake this training. Collaboration between Tangentyere and NTG will see this skills development being offered at a low cost while supporting high impact.

TCAC recommends that LDM be held at the forefront of all NTG agency reform, including policy development. LDM offers considerable opportunities. However, TCAC has identified that to strengthen the LDM framework, several things are needed:

- genuine resourcing and expertise to support the capacity building of governance structures
- adequate resourcing in the transition of services and programs
- transparency in transitioning programs and services to community control, including prompt data sharing and service mapping to improve local understanding of each sector as relevant to community members, including the relevant funding envelop.

In addition, there needs to be:

- genuine engagement from all levels of government so that community control requests are heard and implemented
- NT Government representatives need to be those in positions of authority, with decision-making power
- development of place-based communication strategies
- completion of the NT Government Aboriginal Procurement Policy

NTG Local Decision Making – M&E Research questions

As approved by the TCAC LDM sub-committee and used by local researchers

1. Why do you think Tangentyere started this Local Decision Making work?
2. Why should local people be involved in decision making on their Town Camp?
3. How have you been involved in Tangentyere Local Decision Making work?
4. Do you think they are working well together? Tangentyere and Government?
5. What is working well? And what's not working?
6. Do you think government is listening?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix 3: Jawoyn Region

Overview of JAAC LDM agreement priority areas and achievements.

(As excerpted from the Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation Implementation Plans 2018-2020 and 2021 – 2023)

Agreement 1 – 2018-2020 LDM MAP Implementation Plan	
Priority Areas	Preserving Jawoyn Culture and Heritage
	Business Development and Contracting
	Local Jobs and Training
	Member Services
Strategic Enablers	Capacity Building
	MAP Implementation and Resourcing
	Effective Communication and Engagement

Agreement 2 – 2021-2023 LDM Implementation Plan	
Priority Areas	Preserving Jawoyn Culture and Heritage
	Housing/ Civil Construction Programs and Opportunities
	Local Jobs and Training

Strategic priorities	Achievements: 2018 – 2020
Preserving Jawoyn Culture and Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development and implementation of the Jawoyn Cultural Awareness and Immersion Program. ● Business support for the Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup.
Business Development and Contracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivered a period contract for the delivery of maintenance and upgrades to: trails, grounds, and minor infrastructure within Nitmiluk National Park. ● Purchased a new office, shed and storage yard for Jawoyn Contracting operations. ● Purchase of 4 new boats for Nitmiluk Tours. ● Purchased 2 tractors and equipment to expand capacity of Jawoyn Construction. ● Upgrades to the Nitmiluk National Park visitor centre, park and trails through NT tourism initiatives i.e Tourism Turbo Charge and Mountain Bike Trail Construction. ● Grant to support the establishment of Jawoyn constructions business enterprise. ● Business and development support for Jawoyn Contracting. ● Business support provided for Nitmiluk Tours. ● Linkages to economic, business and tourism committees and supports.
Local Jobs and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● JAAC overall employment has increased to 95 staff across all enterprises approximately 96% of staff are Aboriginal. ● Support for workforce development and upskilling i.e. Jawoyn Rangers training and Jawoyn Contracting training.

Member Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transition of Community Development Program (CDP) to JAAC – Nyirunggulung-RISE. ● Established a new joint venture with Emerge IT – Jawoyn IT.
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A LDM cultural exchange was funded between Gurindji and Jawoyn Aboriginal Corporations to share lessons and ideas related to their respective LDM Agreements and other community led initiatives.
MAP Implementation and Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MAP Implementation Plan endorsed
Effective Communication and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Established positive working relationships with LDM partners

Appendix 4: Groote Archipelago

Overview of ALC LDM agreement priority areas and achievements.

(As excerpted from the ALC LDM Agreement, 2018 and Implementation Plans 2019 & 20202)

Agreement 1 – ALC LDM Implementation Plans	
Priority Area	Outcomes sought
Housing	A single, sustainable, diverse and culturally appropriate community housing system across all towns and satellite communities (considered Homelands by the NT Government) in the Groote Archipelago that the Anindilyakwa people control and take responsibility for.
Economic Development	A viable, culturally rich and sustainable two-stream (diversified) economy in the Groote Archipelago, not dependent upon mining royalty income, which is controlled by Anindilyakwa people.
Law Justice and Rehabilitation	Increased involvement and leadership of the Anindilyakwa people in the justice system, including access to rehabilitative services.
Education	<p>A new, community-controlled, bi-lingual education system in the Groote Archipelago that allows for Anindilyakwa people to control and take responsibility for their own schools, has a curriculum to enable Anindilyakwa people to live in both worlds, and facilitates a single governance model for education in the Groote Archipelago.</p> <p>This will require the establishment of a Joint School Council under the NT Education Act that partners with the ALC and Northern Territory Department of Education.</p>
Health	Transition of control and responsibility for health clinics in the Groote Archipelago from NT Health to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation nominated by the Anindilyakwa people
Local Government	Anindilyakwa people take responsibility for local government in the Groote Archipelago, by the establishment of an Anindilyakwa Regional Local Government Council.

Priority Area	Achievements: 2018 – 2020
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formation of AHAC ● AHAC registered as a Tier 2 Community Housing Provider ● Employment of 15+ Traditional Owners ● Room to Breathe Program almost ready to commence ● Transitional houses for families receiving Room to Breathe renovations identified ● AHAC commenced provision of Homelands Services to 40 houses in the communities of Bartalumba Bay, Little Paradise, Malkala, Emerald River, Yenbakwa, Leskie Pools, Thompson Bay, Salt Lake and Four Mile in July 2020. The services provided include housing maintenance and municipal services. ● AHAC awarded NTG select tender for 21 months (\$733,202) to deliver Tenancy Management Support Services on behalf of the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department) to tenants living in public housing dwellings in the remote communities of Angurugu, Milyakburra and Umbakumba. ● AHAC have partnered with Health Habitat and local service providers to deliver the Housing for Health program across all Groote Archipelago community houses. ● Discussions have also commenced for the transfer of the Township Leases for Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra to a community-controlled entity, together with the Homelands, which presents a unique opportunity to integrate satellite and community housing management under AHAC.

Priority Area**Achievements: 2018 – 2020****Economic Development**

- Select NTG tender awarded 24/11/2021 for 3 years (\$16,754,920) to Aminjarrinja Enterprises Aboriginal Corporation and GEBIE Civil and Construction for the delivery of NT Government Infrastructure at Groote Eylandt Archipelago Communities, including:
 - The demolition of various structures including Remote Community Housing and/or Government Employee Housing dwellings;
 - The construction of new and/or replacement Remote Community Housing dwellings;
 - The construction of new and/or replacement Government Employee Housing dwellings;
 - Room to Breathe modify existing dwellings; and
 - Undertake upgrades on various Remote Community Housing or Government Employee Housing dwellings
- Community consultations have commenced to establish the Traditional Owners' vision for Groote Eylandt post-mining, including the development of a long-term power solution. The ALC is currently in talks with the private sector to develop a large-scale solar farm capable of sustaining the local economy post-mining.
- The ALC has co-funded works to upgrade the telecommunication backhaul infrastructure for improved reliability and connectivity.
- Discussions have commenced with the private sector to create a large-scale aquaculture industry post-mining, and various trials (tropical rock lobster, trepang, black lipped oyster) are already underway.
- ALC has a marine fleet with 14 assets floating on the water and a barge that it owns.
- There is a training pipeline from ranger marine operations to aquaculture to Seaswift.
- The Traditional Owners are undertaking a joint venture (Winchelsea Mining Pty Ltd (Winchelsea) between the Anindilyakwa to mine manganese on Winchelsea (Akwamburrkba) Island.
- Formation of Anindilyakwa Advancement Aboriginal Corporation, which is undertaking a \$7 million exploration program
- Creation of the Aboriginal Sea Company. Governed by a board comprising equal representation from the three land councils with traditional ownership of sea country – Northern Land Council, Tiwi Land Council and Anindilyakwa Land Council – as well as independent industry experts
- Small business start-ups supported like the supermarket and laundry.

Law and Justice Rehabilitation

- Work has begun on the Alternative to Custody Centre at Marble Point.
- Identified as a trial site for 'Law and Justice Groups' under the Northern Territory Aboriginal Justice Agreement
- Developed a model for the Community Justice Group (CJG)
- ALC is partnering with the North Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency to support the CJG and strengthen its capacity during the initial period.

Priority Area	Achievements: 2018 – 2020
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NIAA approved funding for the Independent Boarding School. Funds are to be provided from the Aboriginal Benefits Account (~\$30M) ● The ALC is contributing significant funds to the design of a bi-lingual curriculum, including funding for Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Primary College Aboriginal Corporation (GEBIPCAC) ● Assistant Teachers at the Angurugu school are graduating from the University Certificate of Remote Education (RATE) program
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Groote Archipelago LDM Agreement Health Implementation Plan is yet to be signed. ● The ALC has identified there are 21 full time positions in the health clinics, however, there are not enough local people working in those clinics and there is no suitable accommodation for other workers, nor a group to employ people to work. ● The ALC is negotiating with private sector, through another entity Group Holdings Aboriginal Cooperation and working with the Royalties Trust to negotiate a private sector loan. A \$20 million bridging loan from Westpac bank has been secured to build 30 houses to deal with this problem. That is the centre piece of the Health Agreement.
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Local Government Act 2019 commenced on 1 July 2021 and provides legislative authority for the Administrator or the Minister for Local Government to formally separate the Groote Archipelago out of the East Arnhem Regional Council's boundary area. ● Consultations for Local Government Reform are ongoing.



**Jawoyn
Region &
Werenbun Homeland**

Groote Archipelago



Ngukurr



**Alice Springs
Town Camps**