



**Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa**  
*Martu Cultural Knowledge Program*  
Building Sustainable Martu Communities

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## THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT IN THE MARTU DESERT COMMUNITIES

**October 2018**

**Confidential**

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## Executive Summary

This report complements a cost-benefit analysis prepared by Social Ventures Australia, *Investing in Very Remote Aboriginal Communities – A Cost Benefit Analysis* (henceforth, 'the SVA analysis'). It complements the SVA analysis in three ways.

First, this report provides an expanded argument to justify the recommended government investment. This importantly includes the powerful social case for encouraging Martu to live in desert communities rather than in Newman.

Secondly, this report provides detail on social programs required to complement any investment in remote community housing, if the savings predicted in the SVA analysis are to be secured.

Thirdly, the report identifies some ancillary initiatives that do not require State Government investment but that ground a comprehensive strategy for continuing a healthy trajectory of social and economic development in the Martu desert communities.

### An Expanded Argument for Government Investment

The SVA analysis addresses a threshold issue for investment in a remote Martu community: is it financially responsible? It answers that question affirmatively.

This report recognises that financial prudence is not, alone, a sufficient basis for investment. This report makes the following expanded argument:

1. There is a compelling **social case** for investing in Martu desert communities (see section 2);
2. There is a **policy context** in which investing in those communities is prudent (see section 3);
3. There are significant **opportunity costs** involved in failure by the Western Australian Government to make that investment (see section 4).

These four elements, together, can ground good strategic policy decisions. They ground those decisions in a comprehensive assessment of a particular place and society. Together they represent a model for framing a place-based strategy.

### Investment Required to Secure Savings

The SVA analysis outlines the financial effects for the Western Australian Government of various investment scenarios in one remote Aboriginal community, Parnngurr. It forecasts several major drivers for increased government costs over the next 10 years in the nearest town, Newman, unless the government commits to some strategic investments in

Parnngurr. These costs particularly include substantially increased costs for policing and imprisonment.

Three areas of investment are contemplated in the SVA analysis: provision of improved housing, a diversionary program and modest investment in community administration and development. These initiatives are tightly linked.

As the SVA analysis notes, the investment in remote community housing is an essential precondition to generating the forecast government savings, but it is not sufficient. Diversion and community development are essential to securing the forecast savings.

Costs for each of those investments were incorporated in the SVA analysis. That analysis outlined the nature and cost of the required investment in housing.

This report goes further, providing in section 5 additional detail on the nature and costs of the diversionary and community development programs.

### **Structure of this Report**

This report is primarily organised along the following lines. The introduction sets the scene for this report in the context of the SVA analysis, and emphasises the critical threshold issue of not allowing any one of the desert communities to fail. Such a failure, which can readily happen through inaction rather than explicit policy, will lead to an immediate, substantial and irreversible spike in Government costs.

Section 2 describes the past social consequences of Martu living or spending time in Newman and the predictable effects that increased presence in Newman will have for a variety of stakeholders. This principally focuses on the destructive impact of alcohol on Martu families and other stakeholders. This impact is broad and deep, including high mortality and chronic disease, high crime rates and incarceration, poor education and employment outcomes and serious child neglect.

Section 3 outlines the substantial cultural, social, governance, economic and environmental advances that Martu have secured over the past decade in and from their remote communities. This strong platform provides a policy context in which relatively modest investment can have rapid returns, both financially and socially, in Martu desert communities.

Section 4 identifies the significant range of benefits that the State Government can leverage if remote Martu communities are not simply viable but vibrant, and therefore the opportunity cost of failing to support those communities adequately. These include the leveraging of large-scale, long-term Commonwealth and corporate investment, which will be lost if remote Martu communities become moribund.



Section 5 identifies the key elements of a strategy for continuing social, cultural and economic development in these Martu communities. These include an elaboration of the diversionary program and community development initiatives contemplated (and costed) in the SVA analysis. It also explores two additional and essential strategic initiatives for long-term wellbeing of remote communities, but which do not require WA Government investment: development of an expanded and more diverse Martu economy and the need for food security in remote communities.

### **A New Strategy for Development of Remote Communities**

The SVA analysis and this report provide a foundation for good policy decisions. They gather together:

- rigorous financial modelling of medium-term policy challenges and options;
- detailed data on an array of social problems that the Government wishes to address;
- an elaboration of the capacity of the relevant communities to take on social and economic development;
- complementary investments from which the State Government can benefit;
- a range of complementary strategic initiatives across multiple portfolios and levels of government that can realistically achieve the aspirations of both Martu and the WA Government.

While these studies are explicitly focused on a particular geographic and social context, the method and approach used in these studies can be applied elsewhere. They provide a template for determining the viability and sufficiency of a place-based strategy.

The investment package sought through these reports can ground a pilot to test assumptions and this overall approach. The accuracy of projected costs, measures of social and economic development and measures of return on Government investment could all be tested.

Such a pilot could then reliably ground a new strategic approach to investment in remote communities and a new strategy for the development of those communities.

## **1. Introduction**

This report has been prepared by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) to complement the SVA analysis That report presents the financial case for investment in remote, alcohol-free Martu desert communities in order to avoid the increasing costs caused by the ready access to alcohol in Newman. While the SVA analysis focuses on the quantitative benefits of investment in communities, this report describes in more detail the negative social impacts on Martu living in, or visiting, Newman; and the critical importance of the remote communities in supporting the cultural, social and economic development of Martu.

Town (Newman) is a destructive place for most Martu, due to the long term, pervasive influence of alcohol and drugs. There are very few appropriate employment opportunities in Newman for Martu, a high proportion of children do not attend school and are subject to neglect and abuse by alcohol affected parents. There is no sense of community for Martu and they lack the cultural and emotional support of being on their country. To embrace the potential opportunities that might be available in centres such as Newman, Martu need to be supported and engaged. Long experience has shown that effective engagement is not possible in an alcohol-fuelled environment.

On the other hand, the three Martu desert communities (Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji) are where Martu can be supported into productive economic pathways that ultimately can lead to mainstream employment. Communities are where their children can grow up in a safe, supportive family environment, where they will go to school because the curriculum and teaching environment resonates with their culture and their priorities. Communities are the answer to the intractable social problems and rapidly increasing costs in Newman. The quantitative cost-benefit analysis prepared by SVA demonstrates that investment in housing infrastructure and community development initiatives in communities can result in rapid payback and ongoing cost savings that are multiples of the modest investment proposed.

In addition to the substantial cost savings in Newman that can be achieved by investment in the Martu desert communities, there are also very significant, but less easily quantified, social benefits that will be derived from that investment. That is the thrust of this document: to make the social case for investment in the Martu desert communities, as the solution for tackling the social problems in Newman.

However, for that solution to have a chance of being successful, it is first critically important to ensure that those communities do not unintentionally fail as a result of government inaction.

## **The risk of unintentional community closure**

While the three Martu desert communities (Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji) can be the solution to the social issues in Newman, if not handled appropriately, they also constitute a risk: a risk that could result in costs to the WA government that are much greater than the costs currently being incurred in Newman. The risk is that, due to government inaction, one or more of the desert communities will close, resulting in the transfer of the Martu population into Newman. This will precipitate an urgent need for additional public housing and will lead to a significant increase in anti-social behaviour and resultant policing and imprisonment costs.

The risk of unintentional community closure may not be readily apparent to people who do not have close, regular contact with Martu living in the desert communities. The authors of this paper have had a close, personal association with the desert communities over the past 15 years, in particular with the community of Parnngurr, the focus of the study documented in the SVA analysis. They have been observing and listening to the reactions of Parnngurr residents to the gradual deterioration in housing conditions over this time:

- Parnngurr residents have difficulty in reconciling the standard of their houses with the public housing provided to other Martu (often family members) in Newman.
- They see new houses being built in Jigalong, but not in Parnngurr.
- They understand that Parnngurr being in the national park is an issue, but do not understand why the problem cannot be fixed. To them it is very simple: you just redraw the lines that whitefellas drew originally to create the national park.
- And, if a new health clinic can be built in Parnngurr, why can't the government build more houses?
- No-one from government comes to talk with them, to explain the situation.

There is a growing feeling among Parnngurr residents that they have been abandoned, that nothing will be done and, for some, the only option is to move into Newman. If nothing is done to change this view, the likely outcome is that this loss of hope, along with inevitable further deterioration of housing conditions, will accelerate the move into town. Eventually, the pull of family members in better houses in town and the declining population of Parnngurr will generate social forces that cause a mass, irreversible relocation. This is the scenario that is contemplated in the Base Case analysed in the quantitative cost benefit analysis. And, if one of these communities were to close, it is likely that the others would quickly follow.

It is critically important for the WA government to prevent this scenario from occurring. Not only would it cause a substantial increase in costs

in Newman, but the only practical solution to the social problems and associated costs in Newman would be lost. These communities must not be allowed to fail.

There are relatively low cost initiatives that can be taken immediately that will go a long way towards preventing this scenario from occurring:

- Positive action to remedy the land tenure issue for Parngurr and Punmu, and engagement of Martu in that process, would provide confirmation that the government is listening to their concerns.
- Community development and administrative initiatives could be implemented independently of the land tenure issue, which would provide positive outcomes for community residents, would help to address some of the social issues and costs in Newman and, most importantly, would give people hope for the future of their community. These initiatives are outlined in this paper.

These initiatives are outlined in this paper.

## **2. The Social Impact of Newman on Martu**

### **2.1. Overview of Social Impact**

The overwhelming perception of Martu<sup>1</sup> and of service providers who work with Martu, and the overwhelming quantitative evidence available indicate that town is a dangerous place for Martu and that communities are safer and healthier.

The following examination of social indicators illustrates this. On virtually every indicator, outcomes are markedly worse for Martu in Newman than in the remote communities. In every case, the predominant root cause of these poor social outcomes for Martu in Newman is abuse of alcohol.

The material in this section of the report is based on consultations with a number of non-government agencies that work intensively with Martu people<sup>2</sup> and with WA Police in Newman.

It is in the nature of qualitative analysis on social factors that it will reference impression and opinion to some extent. However, where possible, this study has included quantitative material from consultations and analysis conducted or commissioned over recent years by these agencies working with Martu.

The abuse of alcohol in Newman has serious effects on the quality of life for individual Martu and for communities, the welfare and long-term health of children, the safety of women and children, the potential for social and economic development in the Martu population, the amenity of towns and the capacity for both the Australian Government and the Western Australian Government to achieve policy outcomes that have long been espoused but have not been successful.

The culture of widespread alcohol abuse in Newman is toxic for Martu. Local service providers and police state that the best chances for solutions to alcohol abuse will only be found in dry, remote communities.

All Martu communities have implemented regulations banning alcohol. While these regulations are occasionally breached, the communities are, on the whole, alcohol-free.

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<sup>1</sup> As documented in consultations conducted in the Martu desert communities by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa in November 2017

<sup>2</sup> Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service, Newman Women's Shelter, Newman Reference Group

## 2.2. Mortality

In 2016, Social Ventures Australia prepared a report on Martu mortality, using data collected over the previous 10 years by the Newman Women's Shelter<sup>3</sup>. That report identified:

- the median age of death for a Martu woman over that period was 37, compared to 85 in the general population;
- the median age of death for a Martu man was 43.5;
- 51% of all Martu deaths were caused by alcohol-related illnesses;
- 90% of deaths were attributable directly or indirectly to alcohol (including violence and suicide).

The major causes of death were alcohol-related illness (51%), family violence (14%), diabetes (14%) and suicide (11%).

These findings on mortality are in line with a report by the Department of Indigenous Affairs in 2011, which looked at the impact of alcohol in Newman. That report stated:

Death and chronic illnesses amongst the Martu (including those in their 20s and 30s) as a consequence of alcohol, are devastating<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.3. Child welfare

Alcohol abuse by parents leads to child neglect. Consultations conducted by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa in the desert communities in 2017 identified this as a major problem that Martu perceived with town. The following are quotes from community responses to the question 'What is hard about town?'

- Kids go hungry
- Kids wandering the streets
- Kids don't go to school
- Parents don't control their kids

In 2016, the teacher of the Martu class at Newman Senior High School conducted an exercise in which her students identified what they saw, heard and felt living in Newman<sup>5</sup> compared to what they saw, heard and felt in a film about Martu on country. Their responses (in the children's own words) eloquently illustrated Martu children's perceptions of town:

**What kids see:** *people drinking, people fighting, people bleeding, people sick, people drunk;*

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<sup>3</sup> *Analysis of Martu Deaths in the East Pilbara*, SVA Consulting, 2016

<sup>4</sup> *Newman Discussion Paper 2011 – A focus on the impact of alcohol and remote visitors*, prepared by Helen Shanks, DIA Director Operations - Central, Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2011 at 5

<sup>5</sup> See Attachment 1, *On Country – In Town*, 2016

**What kids hear:** *screaming, yelling, fighting, crying;*

**What kids feel:** *shame, sad, hurt, sick, scared.*

In 2017, the WA Police convened a Youth Summit in Newman, attended by 60 representatives of local government and non-government service providers, to discuss issues for children and youth in Newman. A background paper for the summit prepared by the local police officer-in-charge<sup>6</sup> included collated feedback from Newman service providers. This feedback was summarised in the following terms:

Collated feedback from Newman service providers (Police, YMCA, Newman Women's Shelter):

- High rates of anti-social and criminal behaviour<sup>7</sup> amongst young people within the East Pilbara area
- Increase in substance, sniffing and alcohol misuse. Kids as young as 11 and 12 smoking gunja regularly
- Decline in school attendance
- Level of interagency collaboration and short-lived program delivery
- Lack of parenting. Subsequent feeling of instability of the youth
- Breakdown in family structure
- Youth boredom
- Lack of sustainable and current programs that can assist a juvenile in diverting them from crime and changing their behaviour
- Child safety – and lack of front line services to address these issues (after hours) – there is sometimes no safe place for the kids to go
- Active sexual behaviour that is often not appropriate and leads to STIs, jealousy, partner violence. Some of the young women (as young as 14 to 20) have been physically locked in their rooms, with no toilet, not being fed – by their partners. Increased level of control being asserted by the young men over the girls. This violence tends to be very “nasty” e.g. biting cheeks
- Young girls (more than a dozen in 6 months) that have presented to the Women's Shelter, intoxicated and beaten up. The issue of FASD children in the future as a consequence.

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<sup>6</sup> *Youth in Newman – Background Paper for the August 8 2017 Youth Summit*, Senior-Sergeant Mark Fleskens, July 2017

<sup>7</sup> Youth Policing Toolkit on the SAS portal data identified that in 2016 (YTD), 16 juveniles were processed for burglary on a dwelling. In 2017 (YTD) that figure increased by 218% to 51 (48 indigenous 3 non-indigenous). These figures reflect the apprehension rate, however do not represent a true reflection on the offending rate for juveniles not apprehended.

In 2016, there were 16 juveniles on the Newman police computer system. By 2017, there were 51. Newman police data identifies that 98% of juvenile arrests in 2017/18 were of young Martu offenders.<sup>8</sup>

#### **2.4. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**

Newman Women's Shelter (NWS) is reporting a dramatic increase in the incidence of births with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). As at July 2018, the last eleven pregnant women clients of NWS to give birth all drank throughout pregnancy, with three of the children now in care.<sup>9</sup> NWS was at that time monitoring another four pregnancies in which all mothers were drinking through pregnancy.

The NWS Manager identifies the most effective means of addressing FASD as being education and employment of young men in remote communities.<sup>10</sup> This solution, which may appear counter-intuitive to mainstream agencies, would focus on changing the behaviour of young men, reducing the time that they spend in town, as a pragmatic path to reducing the incidence and severity of drinking by young women.

NWS also reports the emergence of a disturbing long-term correlation between youth suicides and FASD. The Telethon Institute is currently studying NWS data to explore the long-term implications of high levels of FASD in a population.

The manager of the NWS sees the increasing incidence of FASD as particularly alarming when contemplating a significant increase in the Martu population in Newman. She believes that this will lead to a dramatic escalation in the incidence of FASD, with all of the long-term social and economic costs that entails.

Due to a lack of specific data, the potential long-term costs arising from FASD have not been included in the SVA analysis. However, studies and cost data that are becoming available from both overseas and local sources suggest that this cost could be very significant<sup>11</sup>. These are summarised in the SVA analysis.

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<sup>8</sup> *Newman Arrest Statistics*, a data report prepared by WA Police, July 2018

<sup>9</sup> Personal communication with Maggie Lewis, July 2018

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication with Maggie Lewis, July 2018

<sup>11</sup> Thanh NX, Jonsson E. (2009), *Costs of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Alberta, Canada*; Lupton, Burd, and Harwood (2004), *Cost of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders*; Stade et al. (2009), *The burden of prenatal exposure to alcohol: revised measurement of cost*; Popova, Lange, Burd, and Rehm (2016), *The economic burden of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Canada in 2013*; Popova, Lange, Burd, and Rehm (2014). *Canadian Children and Youth in Care: The Cost of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder*.



## 2.5. Child Education

Virtually no Martu children in Newman regularly attend high school. The teacher of the Martu class at Newman Senior High School for 2015 and 2016 (after working at Jigalong school in previous years) commented:

The attendance rate for Martu at the [Newman] high school was below 5%. Short bursts of attendance were invariably followed by long periods of non-attendance. When students did attend, their learning was hindered by hunger and lack of sleep due to the dramas of town life. This meant that very little meaningful learning took place which in turn led to further disengagement<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, discussions with the Principals of the schools in Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji confirmed that, in those communities, if children are in the community they attend school<sup>13</sup>. Since the beginning of 2016, the introduction of a ranger program in Kunawarritji has led to many families returning to the community, with school attendance doubling from an average of 8-12 children to 20-24 children<sup>14</sup>.

The Parnngurr school principal has advised that attendance rates at the school are now over 70%<sup>15</sup>. The school also runs a secondary school program, with 18 students enrolled, of which four have recently enrolled at the Wongutha Aboriginal School near Esperance to continue their education and to participate in Vocational Education Training, a workplace learning program to gain skills that will fit them for future employment. The program has generated strong interest from other Martu communities, many Martu indicating that they want this program for their own students.

## 2.6. Adverse Childhood Experiences

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study<sup>16</sup> in the USA and subsequent similar studies have identified significant correlations between a limited number of adverse childhood experiences and a range of later-life chronic health conditions, mental health problems, substance abuse and suicide.

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<sup>12</sup> Personal communication (email) with Kylie Wiersma, 10 December 2017

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication with school principals, Sarah Mortimer, 2017 and Todd Flanagan, 2018

<sup>14</sup> Personal communication with school principal, Sarah Mortimer, 2017

<sup>15</sup> Personal communication with school principal, Todd Flanagan, 2018

<sup>16</sup> *Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults*, Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss and Marks, 1998 *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, Volume 14, No 4 at 245

The adverse childhood experiences listed by the original study are:

- psychological abuse – including fear of violence;
- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- family substance abuse (alcohol or drugs);
- family depression or mental illness;
- family suicide or attempted suicide;
- violence against the child’s mother;
- imprisonment of a family member.

The presence of one of these factors increased the risk of later-life disease, mental health problems or suicide. As the number of factors experienced increased, the risks of later-life harm also increased. As the study stated in its conclusions:

We found a strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults<sup>17</sup>.

The elaboration of the detail of these studies, including the methodology, the later-life conditions and the statistical analysis, is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the following points are salient. First, local agencies report that virtually all Martu children are exposed to at least one of these adverse experiences, with many children exposed to several. Secondly, the risk of exposure to these adverse experiences is identified as being dramatically increased in Newman, because of the widespread abuse of alcohol and the consequences of that abuse.

## **2.7. Crime and Policing**

To inform the SVA analysis, WA Police extracted data on offences committed between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2017 in Newman<sup>18</sup>. In that period, 42% of all offences committed by Aboriginal people<sup>19</sup> in Newman involved alcohol. However, 75% of domestic violence-related crimes committed by Aboriginal people involved alcohol<sup>20</sup>.

WA Police also collated data on arrests in Newman over a four year period to 2017/18<sup>21</sup>. In 2017/18, 80% of arrested adult offenders and 98% of arrested juvenile offenders were Aboriginal. Martu make up a

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid at 245

<sup>18</sup> Extract of data prepared by the Business Intelligence Unit of WA Police, 11 July 2017

<sup>19</sup> The data is not sufficiently fine-grained to separate Martu from other Aboriginal people, but particularly during this period, the vast majority of Aboriginal people at any time in Newman were Martu

<sup>20</sup> Extract of data prepared by the Business Intelligence Unit of WA Police, 11 July 2017

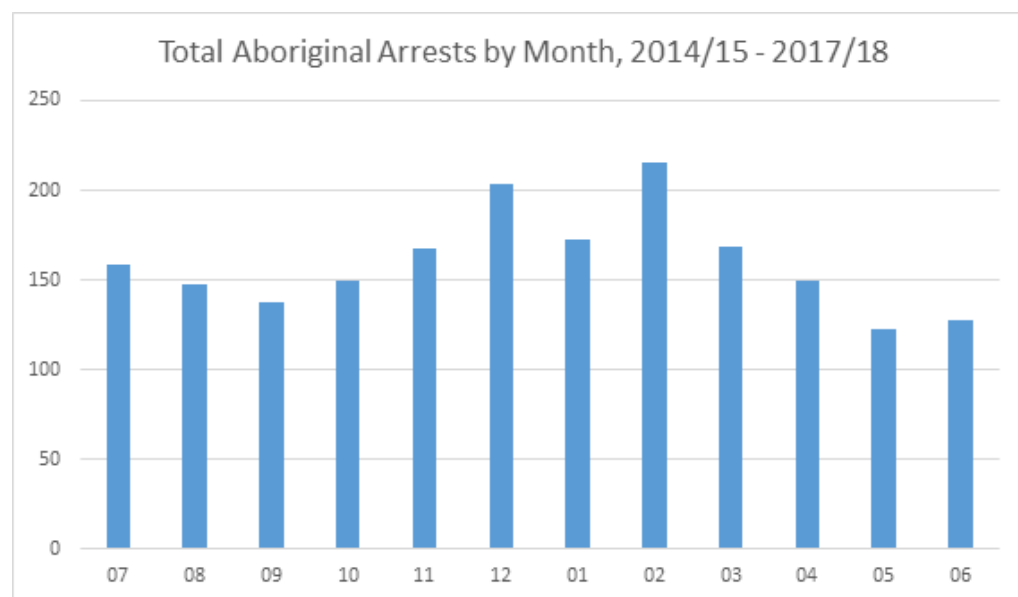
<sup>21</sup> *Newman Arrest Statistics*, a data report prepared by WA Police, July 2018

majority of Aboriginal people in Newman, but only 7% of the town’s population.

As indicated throughout this report, Newman police consistently estimate that in 90% of total police callouts in Newman (which do not always result in arrest or charges), the offenders are Martu<sup>22</sup>.

This demonstrates a consistent historical pattern. In a study conducted by the WA Department of Indigenous Affairs in 2011, which looked at the impact of alcohol in Newman, it was reported that 85% of offences involved Aboriginal offenders<sup>23</sup>.

The arrest figures by month also highlight a significant effect. Each year, the major employment programs in the very remote communities wind down in November and are closed during December and January. Arrest figures are relatively low through the cooler months in which work in the communities is available, and spike for these hotter months, as the chart below (which aggregates monthly data over the last four years) indicates.



This chart confirms anecdotal evidence from both local police and the Newman Women’s Shelter<sup>24</sup> that the summer months create particularly

<sup>22</sup> Personal communication with Senior Sergeant Fleskens of WA Police, August 2017, after a survey of members of the Newman police station

<sup>23</sup> *Newman Discussion Paper 2011 – A focus on the impact of alcohol and remote visitors*, prepared by Helen Shanks, DIA Director Operations - Central, Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2011

<sup>24</sup> Personal communications with Senior Sergeant Fleskens of WA Police and Maggie Lewis, Manager of the Newman Women’s Shelter, June 2017

heavy workloads for those agencies, because there are more Martu in town, drinking.

## 2.8. Community safety

Martu feel safer in remote communities. In the 2017 community consultations conducted by KJ, Newman was invariably characterised by Martu as unsafe. Each community group was asked what was difficult about town. The top responses consistently listed alcohol, violence, fighting, police and lock-up.

On the other hand, in the same consultations in each community, 'safety' was consistently identified as one of the positive characteristics of the remote communities. As one group of young women identified in an earlier, similar consultation, 'It's good here [in Parnngurr] because I am safe and my kids are safe'<sup>25</sup>.

## 2.9. Imprisonment

As part of this study, an analysis of Martu currently in prison was conducted. In June 2018, 89 Martu were incarcerated in 6 prisons around Western Australia.

| Prison       | Number    |
|--------------|-----------|
| Roebourne    | 55        |
| Derby        | 2         |
| Greenough    | 10        |
| Acacia       | 15        |
| Casaurina    | 4         |
| Kalgoorlie   | 3         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>89</b> |

The Newman Women's Shelter has kept figures on incarcerated Martu for a number of years. The current figure of 89 prisoners is relatively consistent with the long-term trend suggested by NWS that at any time 100-120 Martu are in prison<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Comment from documentation of consultations in Parnngurr Community by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, November 2008

<sup>26</sup> Personal communication with the Manager, Newman Women's Shelter, Maggie Lewis, July 2016

As indicated earlier, local police advise that the great majority of these instances of imprisonment relate to alcohol-fuelled crimes in town.

A doubling of the population of Martu in Newman is likely to lead to at least double the number of Martu in prison. The ubiquitous access to alcohol combined with the lack of suitable activities, opportunities and pathways for Martu in Newman will likely lead to high rates of serious crime attracting imprisonment.

## **2.10. Race relations**

Newman agencies report that, thus far, mainstream perspectives on inter-racial tensions in Newman relate chiefly to perceptions of anti-social behaviour (public drinking, arguments, rubbish and noise) and burglaries or thefts. Burglaries and thefts in Newman have risen over the past four years<sup>27</sup>. There has been very little inter-racial violence, although this could change if the level of crime in Newman escalated, as this study postulates.

Anti-social behaviour has a very real impact on the amenity of the town for Martu and non-Martu residents. If this were to escalate substantially, this would become an increasing issue for stakeholders such as WA Police, the Shire of East Pilbara and the major employer in town, BHP. That in turn could lead to more significant and intractable problems for the WA Government and, at an extreme level, to a loss of government revenue.

On the other hand, Martu perspectives on inter-racial tensions in Newman focus on perceived instances of racism, discrimination and exploitation. In the 2017 community consultations, 'racism' was identified as a negative aspect of town by all community groups. In more detailed consultations conducted by the Martu Leadership Program in 2016 and 2017, Martu overwhelmingly described experiences of discrimination in various institutional settings: hospital, banks, shops, taxis, commercial service providers and government services.

The 2017 consultations identified that the major reasons that Martu from remote communities came to town were transactional: for health, licensing, police appointments, Centrelink, court, banking and other services. Increasing the capacity for these transactions to be conducted in remote communities is one part of the strategy of Newman agencies working with Martu or supporting those communities.

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<sup>27</sup> Extract of data prepared by the Business Intelligence Unit of WA Police, 11 July 2017

### **3. The Context for Investment in Remote Communities**

#### **3.1. The Significance of Context**

The SVA analysis makes a purely financial case for investment in remote communities. The preceding section made a case based on the social costs of failing to invest. But these are not a sufficient basis for investment.

If the WA Government is to invest in any remote communities, there needs to be a context that will support long-term social and economic development. The government needs some assurance that the long-term interests of Martu will best be served by supporting remote communities.

This does not require a decision on permanent arrangements or outcomes. Rather it requires a judgement that the most effective pathway to a healthy future framed by Martu aspirations and wishes will be found in remote communities. For that to be true, those communities must be vibrant and filled with opportunities for Martu.

In addition, a common challenge when considering the need for government investment in social outcomes is that savings and outcomes are often likely to be realised only well after the investment is required. In the context of place-based initiatives in very remote Aboriginal communities, a high level of investment is often required in long-term capacity building initiatives, with social outcomes anticipated at a population level over a period of decades.

In the context of Martu desert communities, much of the capacity building required has already been implemented successfully over the past 10 years, and the governance and program management structures necessary to achieve further gains are already in place.

This section examines the current context of the remote Martu desert communities. After a summary of the Martu development trajectory, the benefits to Martu of living in remote communities is explored in five domains:

- the Cultural domain
- the Social domain
- the Governance domain
- the Economic domain and
- the Environmental domain.

#### **3.2. The Martu Development Trajectory**

Virtually all Martu living in the remote desert communities are from the Manyjilyjarra or Warnman language groups. They or their forebears left the desert in the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of those people lived

initially in Jigalong and then in Strelley, from where they decided to return to the desert.

Martu began building their remote desert communities in the early 1980s: Punmu in 1981, Parnngurr in 1983, Kunawarritji in 1984. For the first twenty years, the primary focus of these communities was securing infrastructure and basic services: the construction of housing, schools and community buildings and the provision of municipal and essential services, including schools and clinics.

By 2002, when Martu secured native title over 136,000 square kilometres of desert country, most of this development of basic community infrastructure was complete. But essential elements of building a strong future were missing:

- **culturally**, Martu were practically unable to access and see their country, other than within a small radius of their communities;
- **socially**, Martu were required to engage with mainstream laws, structures and processes with relatively little understanding of these aspects of the Western world;
- in terms of **governance**, Martu were ill-equipped to engage effectively with mainstream regulatory requirements, negotiations with government, administration of finance and negotiation with mining companies and service providers;
- **economically**, there were few opportunities to make incomes other than through the Australian Government's income support system.

While Martu society, language and retained cultural knowledge remained strong, these were not sufficient to construct a vibrant life congruent with the modern context in what were sedentary communities. Development of social and economic understanding and structures that would provide Martu with control over their social trajectory required more. Without such development and with little to do in these communities, a common response was to travel into Newman and drink.

In 2011, the Department of Indigenous Affairs published a report backed by 18 months of research into the impact of alcohol on Martu – particularly Martu visitors from communities – in Newman.<sup>28</sup>

The report recommended:

A rethink of the way government (and other) investment is provided in the remote communities, focussing on targeted investment in function over dysfunction, and along the lines of recognised language and cultural blocs.

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<sup>28</sup> *Newman Discussion Paper 2011 – A focus on the impact of alcohol and remote visitors*, prepared by Helen Shanks, DIA Director Operations - Central, Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2011

- Targeted investment would support the remote communities being a place where Martu are more engaged and stability is increased through improved governance structures.
- It will also mean an agreement on how best to measure the social outcomes of the investment. (E.g. Sustained education outcomes, improved health outcomes, community safety measures, the level of community participation in the “world of work”, and maintenance of culture).<sup>29</sup>

The conclusions of that report about the negative effects of alcohol on Martu in Newman were disturbing harbingers of the current situation. While the WA Government did not follow this recommendation to invest in remote communities, others have invested in cultural, social and environmental programs that have generated substantial benefits since the time of that report. Harnessing that investment, several non-Government organisations have developed these programs to a point of maturity.

As a result of that investment in these organisations’ work, in the 10 years from 2009, Martu have achieved a great deal in developing their communities and in building a substantial and resilient platform for a distinctive and positive community-based society.

This section of the report outlines those advances and the current context. It includes data from a variety of sources as well as conclusions reached in three Social Return on Investment (SROI) studies that Social Ventures Australia have undertaken, assessing the impact of programs run by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa<sup>30</sup>.

As this section indicates, significant benefits to Martu accrue from living in remote desert communities, rather than in Newman. Alcohol is the preeminent factor grounding this difference in qualitative, social outcomes: the remote desert communities are dry, whereas alcohol is both freely available to and widely abused by Martu in Newman. Alcohol is identified as the principal determinant of a broad range of negative social outcomes.

### **3.3. Culture**

Remote desert communities provide Martu with unique pathways to positive social, cultural and economic futures, integrating the mainstream world into their society in ways that work for them. Rather than being seen as ‘cultural museums’ as one former Australian

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<sup>29</sup> *Newman Discussion Paper 2011 – A focus on the impact of alcohol and remote visitors*, prepared by Helen Shanks, DIA Director Operations - Central, Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2011 at 6

<sup>30</sup> *Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa: social, economic and cultural benefits of on-country programs*, SVA Consulting, 2011; *Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa: Social Return on Investment Report*, SVA Consulting, 2014; *The Martu Leadership Program*, SVA Consulting, 2017



Government Minister suggested<sup>31</sup>, they can be seen as incubators if an appropriate strategic approach is taken to their development.

With the appropriate support, remote communities enable Martu to develop distinctive solutions to social issues, distinctive forms of economic participation and a distinctive role in broader Australian life. This is demonstrably possible, because this is happening now in Martu communities – their development over the last 10 years provides a case study for the dramatic social changes that are possible.

KJ's On-Country programs have generated transformative change across the Martu communities. Over the last five years, the programs have produced a wide range of Martu (social and economic) and Jukurpa (cultural) outcomes. The achievement of these outcomes is entirely dependent on the engagement of Martu on-country. The more time that Martu spend on-country, the greater the value created by KJ's On-Country programs.<sup>32</sup>

The retention of culture and a strong cultural identity has enabled traditional authority structures to re-emerge and be strengthened through the Martu Leadership Program, which is focused on developing capability in engaging the modern world<sup>33</sup>. It has provided the essential foundation for that program, which now forms the engine-room for Martu social and economic development, for dramatically improved governance, for adult education across myriad mainstream issues, for addressing intractable social problems, for more effective engagement with government and for general community empowerment.

A Social Ventures Australia study of the impact of the first three years of the Martu Leadership Program stated:

'the MLP is putting in place the foundations that are necessary for Martu to be able to shape their own future.... Martu are empowered: they have the confidence, knowledge and social connections to work with each other and whitefellas to shape a new future for Martu in modern Australia.'<sup>34</sup>

Remote communities allow Martu agency and enhance capacity for governance. They provide a means by which Martu together can

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<sup>31</sup> *Vanstone questions future of Indigenous 'cultural museums'*, Senator Amanda Vanstone, reported by the ABC, 9 December 2005 at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2005-12-09/vanstone-questions-future-of-indigenous-cultural/757866>; and see transcript of interview between Senator Vanstone and Tony Eastley on AM, ABC radio on 9 December 2005 at <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2005/s1527233.htm>

<sup>32</sup> *Kanyirninpa Jukurpa: Social Return on Investment Report*, SVA Consulting, 2014

<sup>33</sup> One outcome identified in an evaluation of the Martu Leadership Program: *The Martu Leadership Program – evaluation of a pilot program*, SVA Consulting, 2017

<sup>34</sup> *The Martu Leadership Program*, SVA Consulting, 2017

exercise control of their future. Dispersal of Martu in a town environment militates against communal identity and action, even before the negative effects of other influences are taken into account. Martu belong to a very traditional desert society; most young Martu adults are one or two generations from a fully traditional desert life. In this context, communal strategies for social and economic development are more likely to succeed than simply leaving individuals to fend for themselves in a very unfamiliar mainstream environment, for which those individuals have been inadequately prepared.

### 3.4. Society

The social benefits that accrue to Martu by living in remote communities are predominantly the converse of those negative factors listed in section 1 of this report. These can be quickly summarised.

**Mortality and chronic disease** are currently substantially determined by alcohol abuse. The less time Martu who drink spend in Newman, the greater their chances of being healthy and living longer.

**Child welfare** is improved in communities. Children have a far greater chance of living in a stable environment, with stable food and sleep, free from fear. Of course, adequate housing is fundamental to their welfare.

The **incidence of FASD** will be reduced if young women do not drink. The greatest chance of reducing young women's alcohol intake is to ensure that their alcohol-free communities are vibrant and engaged and that young men are occupied in communities and reduce their time in town.

**Child education** is improved in communities. School attendance is higher in communities, curricula and teaching methods can be fashioned to resonate with Martu children, culturally-based activities are possible and the school environment is Martu-friendly and safe.

**Adverse childhood experiences** in Martu society are significantly a function of alcohol abuse: physical and sexual abuse, an atmosphere of fear, family substance abuse, family incarceration, family death or separation. An alcohol-free environment for children will reduce the incidence of these experiences.

**Crime** is substantially a corollary of excess drinking. There are few police callouts to communities, whereas the vast majority of police callouts in Newman are to Martu households or locations. A reduction in crime means a reduction in trouble with police and in non-custodial sentences – fines, community hours and suspended sentences – with a resulting reduction in anxiety and family dysfunction.

**Safety** is enhanced in remote communities. Consultations confirm that communities are seen by Martu as safe havens, away from the perils of town. Women's safety and children's safety are significantly enhanced in the communities.

**Incarceration** will be reduced if serious crime is reduced. The majority of crime leading to incarceration occurs in town and is caused or exacerbated by alcohol. Few Martu go to prison for crimes committed in communities.

**Race relations** are a significant concern in town, exacerbated by mainstream perceptions of anti-social behaviour by Martu. This pressure and the practical effects of discrimination are removed in remote communities.

The overall calculus is simple: Newman promotes alcohol abuse, which leads to these destructive social effects; remote communities are alcohol-free, so these effects are greatly lessened.

### 3.5. Governance

Ten years ago, all Martu organisations were effectively run by a handful of powerful, middle-aged men and women. There was a widespread assumption throughout the Martu community that these people were 'the bosses' – they had held unchallenged power over Martu organisations and resources for 20 years.

The track record of achievement of those organisations during that period was sparse, despite overseeing total revenues of approximately \$20m per annum.<sup>35</sup> Remote community members remain angry that, throughout the exploration and development phase of several sites in Martu country during the mining boom and despite substantial revenues flowing into the Martu prescribed body corporate, virtually none of this revenue contributed to facilities or programs in those communities.

Over the past five years, the Martu Leadership Program has provided education and training to Martu adults on mainstream law, structures and processes. Corporate governance has been a key focus. This has led to a revolution in governance across almost all Martu organisations. In that five year period:

- several organisations overseen by those 'bosses' have been placed into liquidation, special administration or voluntary administration;
- the entire board of the largest organisation was banned from directorship of that organisation for three years – a ban which was recently extended for another three years by a 90% vote by the organisation's members at a special general meeting;
- most of that same cohort has been banned by the members of Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa from directorships of that company;

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<sup>35</sup> None of these organisations was responsible for securing Martu native title in 2002, the major achievement during this period. Martu did secure a \$20m windfall through negotiation in the sale of the Kintyre mine by Rio Tinto to Cameco and Mitsubishi, but this was chiefly attributable to the CEO of the Martu prescribed body corporate at the time.

- participants in the Martu Leadership Program comprise the bulk of directors in every community, including two who are chairmen of their remote communities;
- all of Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa's directors are participants in the Martu Leadership Program;
- Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa secured second placing in the National Indigenous Governance Awards in 2016;
- one of Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa's Martu directors is now the Chairman of the steering committee for the \$25m BHP-funded Ten Deserts Project;
- the Martu Leadership Program is now being drawn on to train participants in the Ten Deserts initiative.

Good governance underpins social and economic development. Over the past five years, Martu have shifted from profound centralisation of political and commercial power in very few hands to a more democratised polity in which power is dispersed across a large range of people and integrity in governance is accepted as essential.

This is a profound achievement and provides a key contextual asset for strategic investment in remote communities.

### **3.6. Economy**

Poverty and debt are crippling for individuals and families and can readily lead to entrenched negative cycles. Widespread poverty and debt lead to a collective mindset of acceptance and hopelessness. Economic wellbeing is fundamental to long-term individual and community wellbeing.

The majority of Martu receive Centrelink payments, although that is changing, as explained below. Increased incomes are likely to lead eventually to improved health and education outcomes, reduced crime and imprisonment, reduced substance abuse and suicide.

An improved Martu economy also provides long-term benefits to non-Martu stakeholders: less crime and anti-social behaviour in Newman, lower WA Government outlays, a reduction in welfare expenditure and greater community independence.

The transition from welfare dependence to economic independence is a long-term challenge for Martu. Two contrasting economic stories indicate that the optimal pathway for Martu economic participation and development is likely to proceed from remote communities rather than from town.

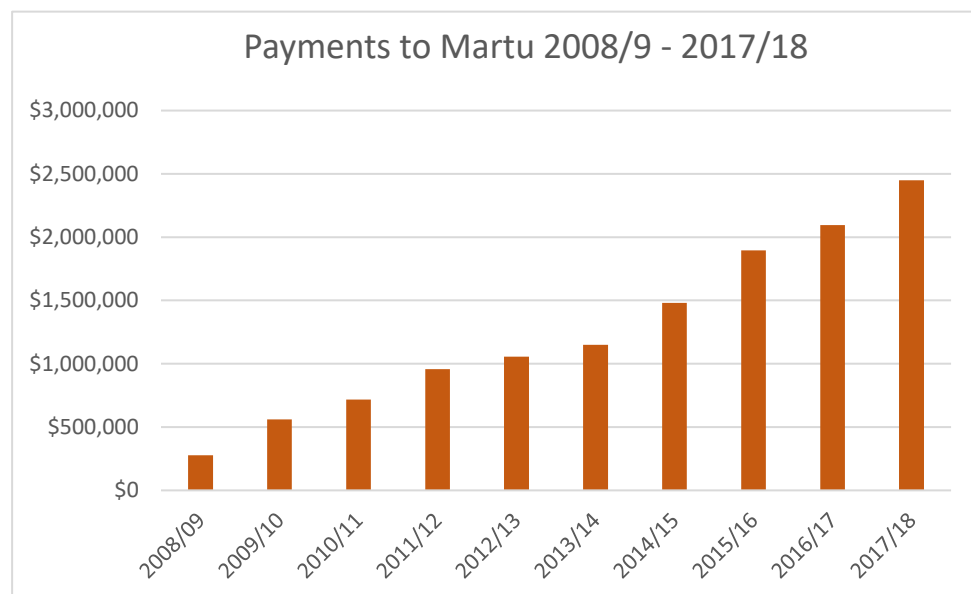
Martu lived through the greatest mining boom in history between 2006 and 2013. Over that period, all Martu adults who wanted to secure fulltime employment in the mining industry could have done so. Local miners, including BHP, Rio Tinto and Newcrest, had Indigenous quotas and actively sought Indigenous employees. They ran a variety of

strategies to secure higher levels of Indigenous employment, including crafted training programs and transport programs to support the engagement of local community members.

During the mining boom, staff of Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa witnessed virtually every young Martu adult in the remote desert communities commence a training program at Newcrest Mining Limited’s Telfer mine on Martu country. Any who finished the training were offered immediate employment. But by the end of the boom, only a small handful of Martu from these remote communities worked at Telfer and three worked for BHP.

On the other hand, KJ started its ranger program in Martu communities in 2009. By the 2017/18 financial year, KJ was the largest employer of Martu, with 61 contracted Martu employees earning \$1.19m, an average of \$19,450 per person, and a further 328 casual employees or contractors earning \$1.27m (an average of \$3,880). This has created a broad base of people gaining familiarity with paid employment throughout the communities.

The following table charts KJ’s increasing engagement with Martu and payment of wages each year from 2009 to 2018.



This chart demonstrates that it is possible to create significant economic opportunities in and from remote communities, if the chosen enterprises have the right characteristics.

KJ has developed a set of predictors for participation in an economic activity<sup>36</sup>. The more of these indicators that an activity satisfies, the more likely it is that there will be strong Martu participation:

- having inherent value to Martu (as, for example, activities that fulfil cultural obligations);
- based on Martu knowledge or skills (such that Martu have confidence);
- owned by Martu;
- located on Martu country (close to family);
- revenue-earning;
- flexible in terms of time;
- grounded in Martu assets (such as country or intellectual property);
- communal rather than individual;
- providing variety;
- with appropriate support.

As an example, both Indigenous art and ranger work (particularly casual ranger work) satisfy all ten criteria while the mining industry (the main industry in the Pilbara) ticks only one. Grounding an economic strategy on Martu participation in mainstream jobs is unlikely to succeed, as all evidence over the past 20 years has demonstrated.

KJ suggests that the analysis above indicates a credible pathway to the development of economic initiatives that are likely to secure high Martu participation. Several of the indicators are more readily satisfied in remote communities. Satisfaction of all or many of the indicators requires distinctively tailored enterprises and a distinctively organised economic framework. That tailoring and economic organisation are most susceptible to activities in remote communities.

The development of niche, high-end tourist offerings provides an example of future economic development options being considered by KJ. There are several characteristics of Martu country that support such development:

- The country is diverse, with salt lake country, desert riverine complexes, sand-hill country, stony desert country and breakaway hills. To Western eyes, much of this is very distinctive.
- As detailed in the next section, Martu country has very high environmental value, including endangered flora and fauna.
- It has substantial Indigenous heritage values. The rock art in several sites has been rated by experts as of equivalent value to the Burrup and Kakadu<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> *Towards a Martu Economy*, paper prepared by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, September 2017

<sup>37</sup> Professor Peter Veth, University of Western Australia, personal communication, 2010

- It also has distinctive Western heritage values. It includes over half of the Canning Stock Route running through it. It was the site of the 'dump zone' for the Woomera Rocket Range, and through that was the site of Australia's best-documented first-contact events, in 1964.
- Senior Martu retain intensely detailed cultural and environmental knowledge, providing a window into pre-contact life.
- Martu lands form a corridor that links other areas of high value to tourists interested in unique Australian experiences. To the east are central desert sites such as Uluru, Kata Tjuta and King's Canyon. To the north is the Kimberley. To the west are Karajini National Park and the Ningaloo Reef. To the south is Perth and the south-west of WA.

In addition, Martu hold intellectual property of real value to the mainstream. This includes the capacity to provide a sharp cross-cultural mirror for government and professional staff seeking insight into remote Indigenous issues and appropriate policy design. Immersive cultural and professional development experiences form a distinctive market that Martu can exploit.

KJ has conducted a number of immersive experiences on Martu country for schools, government and corporate markets, including several for senior BHP executives, one for members of the Pilbara criminal justice system, one for senior police officers from around Australia and several for international and national tour groups. These have been both a commercial success and a proven vehicle for strong cross-cultural engagement. The expansion of this activity is currently the subject of a joint business planning process with Deloitte Private.

A long term economic trajectory for Martu may ultimately include a shift to conventional, mainstream activities: mainstream jobs and businesses. But the primary actor in Martu economic development, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, advocates a crafted response at the outset – the development of pathways within communities to a diverse and much larger long-term economy that resonates with Martu and provides opportunities for work that they find stimulating and rewarding. This is reflected in KJ's strategy for developing a distinctive Martu economy<sup>38</sup>.

However, the influence of alcohol is a major factor in the likely success or failure of economic engagement. Any organisation is far more likely to secure continuing, reliable participation in dry, remote communities than in town, as KJ's experience of long term, increasingly diverse engagement demonstrates.

An exodus from Martu communities is likely to lead to very substantial reductions in Martu economic participation and earnings. A small number of Martu in Newman are employed in a mainstream context, with three working with BHP, several at various schools and two at the

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<sup>38</sup> *Towards a Martu Economy*, paper prepared by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, September 2017

Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service. Several work at Martumili Artists, but in a format congruent with the framework of the distinctive Martu economy contemplated by KJ.

The former Coalition Government in WA advocated a strategy for remote communities that involved incentives for people from remote communities to move to towns and large settlements, described as 'centres of employment and education'. This study indicates that these towns and large settlements pose significant challenges because of the pervasive access to alcohol. This raises the risk that poor educational and employment outcomes will follow from such a shift.

### **3.7. Environment**

Martu hold the strongest form of native title (exclusive possession native title) over 136,000 square kilometres of remote Australia. When coupled with an undeveloped national park in the middle of their country, this land mass totals 150,000 sq km.

In 2012, the largest conservation organisation in the world, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), prepared a report on the significance of Martu country for BHP Billiton<sup>39</sup>, prior to that company making a substantial investment in the conservation of the Martu homelands. TNC summarised the environmental value of the area under consideration (the 'HCP area') in the following terms:

The 8.9 million ha of the proposed Martu HCP area (approx. 1% of the Australian continent) is demonstrably significant for biodiversity conservation in Australia. It will make a substantial contribution to national and global arid zone, wilderness and biodiversity conservation. The HCP area's bioregional significance, many threatened species, significant wetlands, refugia, and significant cultural and heritage values combine with its sheer scale and the unbroken connection of the Martu owners to provide a conservation opportunity of global importance.<sup>40</sup>

TNC went on to elaborate on the global importance of this desert region:

The arid ecosystems of Australia have the lowest levels of human influence of all arid ecosystems globally and have been identified as one of 24 global wilderness areas and in combination with adjacent Northern savannas, Australia's deserts are recognized as one of the five great wilderness areas remaining in the world, along with the Amazon, Antarctica, Canadian Boreal Forest, and the Sahara Desert.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> As the company was then named

<sup>40</sup> *Martu Country: Healthy Country*, a report prepared by The Nature Conservancy for BHP Billiton, 2012

<sup>41</sup> *Martu Country: Healthy Country*, a report prepared by The Nature Conservancy for BHP Billiton, 2012



Many older Martu walked this country to adulthood in traditional times. This means that the knowledge of country is deep and detailed. That knowledge is allowing a melding of traditional techniques for caring for country with Western scientific techniques through KJ's land management programs. This collaboration of traditional ecological knowledge with Western scientific method provides insights for the preservation of natural resources that can inform conservation planning within and beyond Martu country.

Martu country has value to all Western Australians and all Australians. BHP has recognised its unique environmental value with a program that annually injects \$3m towards the preservation of the environmental values. The Australian Government injects a similar amount annually towards the employment, equipping and support of Martu rangers to maintain this environment. The WA State Government has recently awarded a contract to Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa for Martu rangers to provide services in the Karlamilyi National Park. The BHP Billiton Foundation (BHP's international philanthropic fund) has recently granted \$25m to the Ten Deserts Project, a vast landscape-scale environmental effort spanning one third of the Australian continent, including Martu country, that recognises the national and international importance of Australia's arid regions.

The majority of this conservation work relies on the presence and activities of Martu rangers, working out of the four Martu remote communities. This work would be severely diminished if Martu were not present in these communities to conduct the environmental activities.

### **3.8. Will people move back to communities?**

Policy-makers considering this advocacy for the remote Martu communities might well ask whether, once people have moved out of a remote community into a town, will they ever return? Recent experience suggests that, given the right opportunities, they will.

In 2015, a small number of Martu families lived in Kunawarritji, a small, very remote community located near Well 33 on the Canning Stock Route. The community had a store and health clinic and a single primary school class was run by a single teacher from the school in Punmu, two hours away. There was little employment in the community, other than working the petrol bowsers for occasional, seasonal tourists on the Canning Stock Route and CDP.

In early 2016, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa started running their ranger program in Kunawarritji. Within months, ten families had moved back to the community from Port Hedland, Newman and Warralong, occupying all the vacant housing. Many of the men and women who returned had a history of heavy drinking in Port Hedland or Newman.

The average attendance at the school jumped from 8-12 children to 20-24 children<sup>42</sup>. Fifteen men and three women started work with the ranger team. Several of these men and women joined the Martu Leadership Program and took places on the community council.

In short, the provision of engaging activity and employment in the community led to a revitalisation of one of the most remote communities in Australia.

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<sup>42</sup> Personal communication with school principal, Sarah Mortimer, 2017

## **4. Opportunity Costs of Failing to Invest**

### **4.1. The stakeholders in Martu development**

The principal stakeholders in the social consequences of a largescale shift to Newman are Martu individuals and families. The dominant costs and benefits examined for each of the five domains – culture, society, governance, economy and environment – relate to outcomes for Martu.

However, there is a range of secondary stakeholders in such a dramatic shift in population. Some, like the Australian Government and BHP, are significant investors in Martu lands and communities. This section demonstrates that the WA Government will lose all or much of the benefit of these investments if there is a substantial shift away from remote communities.

### **4.2. Environment**

Over the past 10 years, the Australian Government has invested over \$20m in ranger programs operated by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa from Martu communities. The primary character of the ranger program is as an environmental program, seeking benefits for the Australian community through care for natural resources.

Over the past 10 years, BHP has invested over \$18m in environmental, cultural and social programs conducted by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa on Martu lands. BHP currently invests more annually in these programs than the Australian Government.

In addition, the BHP Foundation recently injected \$25m over five years into the Ten Deserts Project, an ambitious environmental, cultural and social program spanning one third of the Australian continent, including Martu homelands.

As indicated earlier, most of this environmental work relies on rangers from remote Martu communities. The State Government's Parks and Wildlife Service has little activity in this vast desert area, other than in partnership with and funded by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa. Movement away from these communities will greatly jeopardise the environmental work as well as the social and economic benefits that flow from it.

### **4.3. Economy**

The Australian Government also has a direct stake in the economic development of Martu society, with the consequent impact on income support payments. Together with the Western Australian Government, the Australian Government also has political and moral interest in that economic development.

Very significant progress has been achieved on this economic development over the past 10 years. A stable base has been built with economic participation growing year-on-year. That base is now being built from, to create more diverse and substantial economic opportunities.

Two economic consequences will flow from an exodus from remote communities. First, the significant momentum that has been built will be squandered – current ranger work cannot be viably performed from Newman. Secondly, the ability to build a stronger, broader economic foundation for Martu people will be severely curtailed because of the pervasive effects of alcohol in Newman.

The best chance for achieving Martu economic development and pathways to more resilient economic participation lies in the remote communities. That chance will be lost if the communities are not adequately supported.

#### **4.4. Health**

The Australian Government currently provides the bulk of funds for the Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service, the Martu-run service which provides clinics and frontline medical treatment for Martu in the communities. The annual cost of a clinic in a remote community is approximately \$900,000<sup>43</sup>.

In addition, the Australian Government has funded the construction in 2018 of new clinics in each of Parnngurr and Punmu. Each clinic cost \$2.3m. Each includes dialysis facilities for three people, which can be operated by family members of patients. These facilities will not only provide significant benefits to patients and their families but will also reduce the load on facilities in Port Hedland and Perth, where Martu must currently travel to access dialysis facilities.

The value of these Australian Government investments will be lost if the population of these remote communities dwindles due to poor housing conditions.

#### **4.5. Education**

The Australian Government funds the independent schools in the three remote Martu communities. Each school has substantial infrastructure worth several million dollars as well as recurrent costs of between \$1m and \$1.5m.

The difference between educating Martu children in communities rather than in Newman is taken into account in the SVA analysis. However, there are additional opportunity costs for the WA Government if these independent schools were to close.

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<sup>43</sup> Data supplied by Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service

The key to successfully educating Martu children is to have them engaged, and wanting to learn. Students are more likely to engage in schooling where their culture and knowledge systems are valued and they can see their own people leading elements of their learning. All of this is possible and is currently being implemented in the schools in the Martu desert communities.

In this context, the Parnngurr community has made very clear its vision for their school: for students to learn enabling English language literacy and numeracy skills for the necessary interactions with mainstream Australia, while at the same time emphasising that intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge is an essential element of children and young peoples' learning. These expressed goals are what directs the school's teaching and learning program.

In conjunction with the CSIRO Science Pathways project, Parnngurr Community School has prepared a two-way learning curriculum, which acknowledges the value of two separate knowledge systems and uses the students' strength in one system to inform education in the other. Science Pathways has produced over 600 pages of resources for students of all age groups that lead teachers and Martu through a process for combining the deep Martu traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) with western science and other learning areas. They also show how Martu and teachers can work together effectively to empower Martu as educators and to value their cultural knowledge in a form of genuine 'two-way learning'.

This form of two-way learning is proving to be highly successful in Parnngurr, where Martu teaching aides are employed in the classroom to facilitate the learning process, and students can regularly be taken out on-country to engage in "real life" learning experiences that combine Western science with traditional knowledge.

The program has been in use for less than two years in Parnngurr and, already, a substantial improvement in student attendance and achievement is evident. Young Martu children are now reading and writing at a standard that is equal to, or better than, their mainstream counterparts. The value of this carefully constructed and highly focused learning process would be lost if the same Martu children had to be educated in Newman.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Personal communication with Todd Flanagan, Principal of Parnngurr Community School, October 2018 and see also <https://www.parnngurrschool.wa.edu.au/learning-areas/integrated-curriculum-project-based-learning>

#### **4.6. Diversion from crime and incarceration**

As outlined in the SVA analysis, policing and imprisonment of Martu in Newman represent substantial costs to the WA Government. These costs will increase dramatically over a ten-year period if the remote communities are forced to close through lack of investment.

Diversions programs can reduce imprisonment by providing a sentencing option for courts. They can provide an opportunity for police to divert. They provide transitional options and support for prisoners released from prison, seeking to change past patterns of alcohol abuse and trouble. They further not only the Martu community's aspirations to have young people out of prison, but the aspirations of governments to reduce Indigenous incarceration and to craft effective programs to reduce crime and recidivism.

But if communities fall into disuse, there is also a relevant opportunity lost to reduce the costs of policing and imprisonment. Diversions programs, such as that currently being implemented by Kanyirrinpa Jukurrpa, are seen as viable only because of the context and opportunities in remote communities: an alcohol-free location far from town, funded ranger work, capacity for social support and the ability to leverage existing, proven programs with high levels of engagement.

#### **4.7. Amenity of Newman**

BHP has a unique interest in the future of Martu. In addition to BHP's heavy investment in Martu programs and communities, particularly in relation to the preservation of the Martu desert environment, the company has a very direct interest in the safety and amenity of the town of Newman. Most families in Newman include employees or contractors of BHP or service providers to a town that is founded almost entirely on BHP's mining operations. Negative social behaviours have a significant effect on the amenity of the town and thus on the capacity that BHP has to attract and retain staff and contractors. Ultimately, a significant loss of amenity could have an effect on the scale of mining operations and level of royalties paid by BHP.

Another range of secondary stakeholders are not investors, but have a significant stake in social outcomes for Martu and for Newman. Newman is the largest town in the Shire of East Pilbara and its administrative base. The amenity of the town, including the level of alcohol abuse, anti-social behaviour, crime and child welfare problems, is an issue of genuine and appropriate concern to the Shire. Similarly, the residents of Newman have a legitimate interest in the safety and amenity of the town.

## 5. Key Areas for Investment

Adequate investment in remote communities will have three major effects.

First, it will avoid the scale of increased outlays identified in the SVA analysis, chiefly in policing and incarceration.

Secondly, it will reduce the social costs outlined in Section 1 of this report. That is not only critical to Martu wellbeing but also to the government's achievement of priorities in Indigenous policy.

Thirdly, and most importantly, it will enhance the long-term likelihood of cultural, social and economic development for Martu people. It is this development that will ensure the long term reduction in the social costs currently being experienced.

There are two initial areas that require attention by the State Government without significant investment.

1. **Place-based strategy** – this provides the foundation for any joint approach to improving the life conditions of Martu. This requires close cooperation between the relevant government and non-government agencies in the Pilbara to invest in a coordinated and strategic fashion. In particular, as the costs and savings elaborated in the SVA analysis involve a number of WA Government portfolios, it is critical that a coordinated place-based strategy is adopted to secure savings and social outcomes.
2. **Tenure** – resolution of the tenure of Parngurr and Punmu communities, which currently lie inside Karlamilyi National Park, is a prerequisite to investment in housing in those communities.

The area that requires major investment by the State Government was identified in the SVA analysis:

3. **Housing** – a combination of refurbishment of existing houses and construction of a number of new houses, as outlined in the SVA analysis. Without housing, it is impossible to implement complementary strategies directly addressing social and economic development.

The SVA analysis also identified two additional areas of WA Government investment that are essential complements of improved housing: provision of modest Community Support and funding of a diversionary program. These investments would enable:

4. **Community Transport** – to help Martu to return quickly and easily from Newman to communities. (See section 5.1)
5. **Community transactional facilities and support** – digital facilities in communities allowing Martu to conduct more transactions from remote communities, rather than being required to attend Newman. (See section 5.2)

6. **Diversion from alcohol, crime and prison** - options for the local police, magistrate, prison and counsellors that will effectively divert Martu from crime and prison. A key part of this program is a rehabilitative initiative that resonates with Martu to reduce alcohol abuse. (See section 5.3)

Finally, there are two additional programs that may not require investment by the WA Government, but that are essential to building strong, resilient communities:

7. **Expanded economy** – a broader, more diversified economy in Martu communities that employs more people. (See section 5.4)
8. **Food security** – a strategy to ensure that sufficient, nutritious food is available at reasonable cost in remote communities. (See section 5.5)

Each of these requires a separate strategy. Complete, stand-alone strategies, including costings, will follow this report. For that reason, each of the issues is only discussed briefly below, with indicative rather than formal costings.

Of course, there are additional issues in health, education and safety that require attention to meet the government's objectives in relation to Martu wellbeing. These are beyond the scope of this paper. However, the likelihood of improvements in all of these areas is greatly enhanced by stable, vibrant remote communities.

## 5.1. Transport

There is no public transport between Newman and the remote communities. Martu are therefore completely reliant on private means to cover the hundreds of kilometres into and out of town.

As a result, Martu who are required to attend town for myriad good reasons (court, licensing, police reporting, vehicle needs, shopping, specialist medical and dental services, travel to Perth) become stuck in town. With inadequate suitable accommodation in Newman, they are often required to stay in dysfunctional, drinking households. This transient population has a significant impact on the rates of crime, policing and incarceration in the Martu community<sup>45</sup>.

The lack of public transport is exacerbated by the relatively few Martu who have drivers' licences or working vehicles.

Transport has repeatedly been identified as a principal unmet need:

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<sup>45</sup> See the discussion of costs related to this transient population in the SVA analysis



- In 2011, a study by the Department of Indigenous Affairs recognised the need for good transport between communities and Newman<sup>46</sup>. In a survey of 107 Martu, this study confirmed that 100% of respondents stated that they been required to secure a lift to come into Newman.
- In 2012, the Newman Reference Group, funded by BHP Billiton, commissioned RPM Project Management to conduct a study of Martu mobility, identifying measures that could address problems caused by mobility. That study<sup>47</sup>, based on 187 interviews with Martu, identified that 85% of Martu interviewed said that they spent longer in Newman than they wished to after travelling to Newman, because of the lack of transport. The study recommended the provision of a transport service between Newman and the communities.
- In 2013, the Newman Reference Group prepared a Newman Strategy<sup>48</sup>, gathering the outputs of a range of studies and identifying the top priorities for investment in Martu development – transport was the second priority, after measures to improve safety for visitors to Newman.
- In 2017, community consultations conducted by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa identified transport as a high priority for Martu in every community.

Despite these studies that consistently identify transport as a key issue for Martu from remote communities and a significant contributor to self-harming and dangerous behaviour in Newman, there has been no funding of any transport arrangement.

The Newman Reference Group has initiated an informal, cooperative pool to help transport Martu back to communities from Newman. It has also prepared a flexible strategy for providing quick, appropriate and low-cost transport between communities and Newman.<sup>49</sup> That would cost approximately \$250,000 per year (for all communities). The portion of this cost relating to Parnngurr residents, and the resultant benefits due to Martu spending less time in Newman, have been included in the SVA analysis.

## 5.2. Transactional facilities

The time that Martu need to spend in Newman is greatly determined by their need to conduct business there. Because of the lack of public transport, each trip to Newman can cost hundreds of dollars in diesel

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<sup>46</sup> *Newman Discussion Paper 2011 – A focus on the impact of alcohol and remote visitors*, prepared by Helen Shanks, DIA Director Operations - Central, Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2011

<sup>47</sup> *Ngurra Kujupa Jarnu*, RPM Project Management, October 2012

<sup>48</sup> *The Newman Strategy* a presentation prepared by the Newman Reference Group, November 2013

<sup>49</sup> *Transport to Communities – Alternatives*, discussion paper prepared by the Newman Reference Group, May 2018

and vehicle costs. The cost and difficulty become a practical impost on life in communities.

Of course, some people come to town for purely social reasons, including to drink. But to the extent that time in town can be reduced, the likelihood is that negative social effects can be commensurately reduced.

In consultations conducted by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa in the remote communities in 2017, Martu identified a broad array of reasons that they needed to go to town: medical appointments, court, police reporting, licensing, banking, vehicle repairs, shopping, dental appointments and so on. These reasons accord with previous, extensive consultations on this question.<sup>50</sup>

When asked whether people would travel less frequently to town if these activities could be conducted in communities, the overwhelming response was that they would.

Conduct of more transactions from within communities requires three things.

First, it requires technical infrastructure such as video-link facilities or conventional internet access. Five years ago, it was difficult to provide adequate facilities. However, satellite-based NBN services are now sufficient for most purposes, if there is a sufficient data allowance. The necessary infrastructure costs approximately \$10,000 per community.

Secondly, it requires the cooperation of the companies and agencies that the transactions involve. This may require changes to processes, which need to be negotiated. This involves no up-front or recurrent cost.

Thirdly, it requires support. Martu need support to access and conduct the transactions. These often involve interaction with agencies with no experience of Martu, with staff who speak in technical terms about processes that Martu do not understand. In addition, the creation of simple and appropriate processes for all of these transactions requires someone who understands the Martu community context and requirements and who can negotiate with providers. This requires the employment of one person at a full cost of approximately \$200,000, of which the salary costs of \$150,000 per annum have been included in the SVA analysis.

This is a relatively low-cost initiative that would greatly enhance the independence of remote communities.

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<sup>50</sup> See for example, *Ngurra Kujupa Jarnu*, RPM Project Management, October 2012

### 5.3. A diversionary program

Diversion is often spoken of as a sentencing alternative to prison. However, in the Martu context, diversion is seen as a means by which a person who is trapped in a cycle of dysfunction can escape that cycle and change their life's trajectory.

This can operate with several entry points: self-referral, referral by police, referral or sentence by a court or transition from prison, whether through parole or simply on release.

The Martu Diversionary Program currently being developed by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa has the following key elements:

- **community-based** – continuing, unbroken residence in community for an extended period, to escape town;
- **work** – guaranteed, immediate work through the ranger program, expanded on-country economic initiatives or other community employment options;
- **education** – participation in adult education activities through the Martu Leadership Program;
- **action on alcohol** – participation in the Alcohol Program outlined above, include Wama Wangka (outlined in detail below);
- **mentoring** of the person by nominated Martu in the community.

The diversionary program therefore leverages substantial existing funding provided by the Australian Government and corporate and philanthropic sponsors, it builds on existing, successful programs that have been proven to have high levels of engagement and it is focused on community. It has been designed by Martu and has Martu support.

The major investment required for the Martu Diversionary Program is the organisational infrastructure, which has three components.

The first is the Martu Court, an initiative designed by Martu in conjunction with the Pilbara Magistrate. This is a forum in which offenders work with a panel of Martu to develop a personalised diversionary program, which leads to a formal agreement which is then recommended to the magistrate. This would cost around \$150,000 a year.

The second is the centralised administrative support required to run the program. This would cost around \$300,000 a year.

The third is the provision of adequate support in communities by Martu mentors. This would cost around \$100,000 a year.

The full estimated cost of this program (other than *Wama Wangka*, discussed below) has been included in the SVA analysis as a WA government cost, and the resultant benefits of reduced cost of imprisonment have been included as a cost reduction.

The design and final costing of the Martu Court and of the Martu Diversionary Program will be outlined in focused strategy documents by the end of 2018.

#### **Wama Wangka – A Martu Alcohol Program**

As the SVA analysis and this report have both identified, alcohol abuse is the principal driver of social dysfunction and crime in the Martu community, with the attendant costs to government and damage to people. Martu immediately identify *wama* (alcohol) as the most significant social challenge that they face.

There has been no effective implementation of a mainstream alcohol-reduction program in Martu communities, despite several health providers attempting such programs.

Mission Australia currently provides alcohol counselling services in the East Pilbara. It is working closely with Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa to design a program that will be effective for Martu, particularly for people in the remote communities.

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa has developed, though not fully implemented, an alcohol strategy as part of its diversionary program. It involves several major components:

- a series of films in which Martu who formerly drank but do not now speak about their experiences in Martu Wangka – Martu speaking to Martu about *wama*;
- participation in employment in and from communities, which KJ can provide;
- participation in adult education through the Martu Leadership Program;
- Martu-led cultural activities, including on-country trips and camps, in which cultural identity is reinforced;
- group discussions, both on-country and in communities, focused on patterns of and reasons for drinking;
- a program to provide individuals and groups with techniques to deal with trauma and grief (which are ubiquitous);
- the conscious development by a set of Martu role models of a new cultural narrative about Martu and alcohol.

Many of these elements can be located within an initiative that Martu themselves have recently started, *Wama Wangka* ('Talking about Alcohol'). In discussions in communities, young Martu recognise their own addiction to alcohol and speak of a desire to escape it. But the translocation of mainstream programs that do not resonate will not be effective.

The development of a distinctively Martu strategy, led by Martu, to address alcohol abuse is the strongest approach to addressing a societal issue.

This strategy requires redirection of some of the existing government investment in conventional programs such as individual counselling to a more community-based approach. The cost of fully developing and piloting this program in one community is approximately \$400,000 spread over two years. It is likely that this amount can be secured from sources other than the WA Government.

#### **5.4. Economic Development**

The major industry in the Pilbara is mining. As discussed earlier in this paper, all Martu could work in this industry if they wished to and were adequately trained. But as recent experience demonstrates, the mining industry is not the silver bullet that will ground an expanded Martu economy or widespread private incomes.

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa has developed a strategy for economic development in Martu communities, which accords with Martu aspirations and capacity and which is grounded in evidence.

That evidence takes three forms:

- proven engagement by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa that has led to consistently increasing wage-earning by Martu;
- analysis of economic activities that have proven effective and popular in Martu communities, and synthesis of principles from that experience;
- a series of consultations through the Martu Leadership Program to confirm the shape of economic organisation and activities that will resonate strongly with people in the communities.

This strategy does not require substantial government support for revenue-earning initiatives. Rather, it requires support for the organisational infrastructure that will enable Martu-owned, Martu-engaging activities to thrive.

The strategy is a departure from previous, failed government policy for economic development in remote Indigenous communities which is all based on participation in the mainstream labour market. Compared to that more conventional policy, it is low-risk.

A place-based strategy in which Government, non-government organisations, companies and Martu are partners could readily trial this new approach at relatively little cost. The required infrastructure would be similar in form and cost to a business incubator. Individual enterprise activities could grow either from self-generated revenues or from modest, targeted seed funding.

The investment required for the organisational infrastructure is likely to be available from several sources other than the WA Government.

## **5.5. Food security**

Nutrition is fundamental to good health. Several chronic diseases that are endemic in Martu communities – diabetes, renal disease, hypertension – are significantly exacerbated by poor nutrition (as well as alcohol abuse).

The lack of fresh food, lack of range and high cost of food were high priority concerns raised by Martu in every community during Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa's 2017 community consultations.

The economics and practical challenges of food security are complex. In each of the remote Martu desert communities, the community stores are owned by the community but, in practice, are controlled by the Community Coordinator. Over many years there has developed a practice whereby surpluses generated by the store are viewed as the prime means of funding small, but necessary, community development projects, due to the difficulty of sourcing external funding. This practice has led to unnecessarily high prices and an orientation that can lead to the store stocking high profit margin items in preference to those that are most advantageous for the health of residents.

This is a challenging area, in which health, logistics, the funding of basic community operations and poverty intersect. It requires a tailored strategy, with close cooperation between government, community councils, community administrators, health providers, food providers and transport providers.

## 6. Conclusion

The SVA analysis and this report provide a foundation for good policy decisions in relation to the Martu desert communities. They gather together:

- rigorous financial modelling of medium-term policy challenges and options;
- detailed data on an array of social problems that the Government wishes to address;
- an elaboration of the capacity of the relevant communities to take on social and economic development;
- complementary investments from which the State Government can benefit;
- a range of complementary strategic initiatives across multiple portfolios and levels of government that can realistically achieve the aspirations of both Martu and the WA Government.

But there is a need to act with some urgency. As outlined in the Introduction, continued inaction on housing and related issues can lead to precipitate collapse and closure of any of these desert communities. Loss of faith that Government will act, for example on the long-standing threshold issue of tenure, can accelerate this collapse. That would lead to unnecessary consequences that would be both socially and financially dire.

Some of the less-costly and readily achievable initiatives outlined in section 5 – such as expanded community support for transport and transactional facilities and action on the issue of tenure – could easily ground a renewal of faith in the future of these communities.

This paper and the SVA analysis identify a package of investment and initiatives that, together, can ground a strong and healthy future trajectory for Martu who currently live in or wish to live in these communities. Simultaneously, they can ground responsible financial planning for the WA Government in relation to this distinctive segment of the WA population.

While these studies are explicitly focused on a particular geographic and social context, the method and approach used in these studies can be applied elsewhere. They provide a template for determining the viability and sufficiency of a place-based strategy.

In the same way, the investment package sought through these reports can ground a pilot to test assumptions and this overall approach. Such a pilot would allow several key elements to be tested: the accuracy of projected costs, measures of social and economic development and measures of return on Government investment.

Such a pilot could then reliably ground a new strategic approach to investment in remote communities and a new strategy for the development of those communities.